

**Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family During the  
Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547**

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**Declaration of Authorship**

I ..... hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

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<sup>1</sup> I dare you to get a zebra into yours.

## **Abstract**

This thesis argues for the centrality of the Howard women to their family's political fortunes by exploring key dynastic episodes, themes, and events of Henry VIII's reign from a new female perspective. The Howards were England's premier aristocratic dynasty during this period. However, existing narratives have prioritised the careers of the Howard men, notably the two Dukes of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey. Here, the family's women are foregrounded. They are not considered in isolation, but discussed alongside their male relations in order to create a fuller, more complex dynastic picture than currently exists. Themes of rebellion, dynastic identity, matriarchy, patronage, treason and religion are woven through events of familial and national importance, allowing new conclusions to be drawn regarding the Howard women and the Howard narrative itself; the way that aristocratic dynasties operated; the activities of women within the political sphere; and the relationship between this family and the Henrician state.

This thesis draws its conclusions from new archival research into the activities of five Howard women: Agnes Tylney (c. 1477-1545) and Elizabeth Stafford (c. 1497-1558), the wives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Dukes of Norfolk respectively; Agnes' daughters Anne, Countess of Oxford (c. 1498-1558) and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater (d. 1554); and Elizabeth's daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond (c. 1519-1557). These five women cover three generations and two concurrent branches of the Howard family across the entirety of Henry's reign. The thesis differs from traditional gender studies by focusing on women all from one family rather than those of particular court status or geographical

location, as this facilitates exploration of the relationship between kinship networks and politics. Thus it also builds on recent scholarship emphasising the role of the family in early modern politics, and reveals the Howard women as important actors on a public, political stage.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

<i>APC</i>	John Roche Dasent (ed.), <i>Acts of the Privy Council</i> , new series, 32 vols (London, 1890-1964)
BL	British Library
Add.	Additional MS
Add. Ch.	Additional Charter
Harl.	Harley MS
<i>CPR</i>	Calendar of Patent Rolls
<i>CSP Spain</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Spain</i> , ed. by G. A. Bergenroth <i>et al.</i> , 19 vols (London, 1866-1954).
CUP	Cambridge University Press
<i>EHR</i>	English Historical Review
<i>HMC</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>Lisle Letters</i>	Muriel St Clare Byrne (ed.), <i>The Lisle Letters</i> , 6 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)
<i>LP</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. by J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie, 22 vols (London: HMSO, 1862-1932)
<i>PCP</i>	Nicholas Harris Nicholas (ed.), <i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England</i> , 7 vols (London: Record Commission, 1834-7)
NLW	National Library of Wales
NRO	Norwich Record Office
<i>ODNB</i>	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary
OUP	Oxford University Press
<i>Spelman's Reports</i>	John Spelman, <i>The Reports of John Spelman</i> , ed. J. H. Baker, 2 vols (London: Selden Society, 1977).
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office



<i>Statutes of the Realm</i>	<i>The Statutes of the Realm</i> , ed. by T. E. Tomlins and W. E. Taunton, 9 vols (London: Records Commission, 1810-25), III
<i>Survey of London</i>	<i>The Survey of London</i> , ed. by C. R. Ashbee <i>et al.</i> , 47 vols (London, 1854-).
<i>The Diary of Henry Machyn</i>	<i>The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A. D. 1563</i> , ed. by John Gough Nichols (London: Published for the Camden Society as vol. 42, 1848)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
C	Chancery
E	Exchequer
LR	Land Revenue
SC	Special Collections
SP	State Papers
STAC	Star Chamber
PROB	Probate
WARD	Court of Wards
Wriothsesley, <i>Chronicle</i>	Charles Wriothsesley, <i>A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A. D. 1485 to 1559</i> , ed. by William Douglas Hamilton (London: Published for the Camden Society, 1875-7)

## **Introduction**

The Howards were the most important noble dynasty of Henry VIII's reign. Tudor political history cannot be written without them; they lived their lives at its core, in the shadow of the Crown. No other family saw two of its members ascend the throne of England during this period and no family suffered so many dramatic falls from grace. However, aside from the two Howard Queens, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, the existing narrative of Howard family fortunes has not prioritised the dynasty's women. Yet scholarship over the past two decades, notably that of Barbara Harris, has shown that women as well as men could play an important political role. In her study of aristocratic women during the early Tudor period, Harris demonstrated the need for a wider definition of political activity, encompassing the private as well as the public and thus revealing the power women could wield as political patronesses.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, historians have particularly noted the efforts made by women on behalf of their families, and have begun to recognise that familial networks were fundamental to local and national politics during this period.<sup>2</sup> This thesis therefore explores key episodes, themes, and events of Henry VIII's reign from the new female perspective of the Howard women, and in doing so, reveals their centrality to their family's political fortunes, and those of the state.

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<sup>1</sup> B. J. Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *Historical Journal* 33 (1990), 259-81.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), 38-69; Sharon Kettering, 'The patronage power of early modern French noblewomen', *The Historical Journal* 32 (1989), 817-841; Helen Payne, 'Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court, 1603-1625', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 164-80; Kristin Bundesen, "'No other faction but my own': Dynastic Politics and Elizabeth I's Carey Cousins' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2008).

## Why Women?

Scholarship on early modern women has gained enormous momentum over the last two decades, so much so that in 2007 Rosemary O'Day was able to state that 'historians...now see women's history as an essential part of any historical writing'.<sup>3</sup> Surveys by Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Bernard Capp, and Barbara Harris have been instrumental in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Harris' work has been particularly seminal, not only in providing a much-needed survey on aristocratic women across the early Tudor period (which has furnished this study with context and comparative examples), but in feminising the definition of politics. Building on work emphasising the personal nature of politics expressed through patronage, Harris demonstrated that so-called 'domestic' activities associated with women, such as household and estate management, patronage, marriage, and the raising of children, were as much political concerns for the nobility as the traditional 'public', male-dominated activities of office-holding, lawsuits, and government participation.<sup>5</sup> As a result, it became clear that there were few boundaries between the domestic, or private, sphere, and the political, or public:

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<sup>3</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *Women's Agency in Early Modern Britain and the American Colonies* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550* (Oxford: OUP, 2002). See also Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (London: Harper Collins, 1995). For similar surveys outside this period, see Jennifer C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), and Ingrid Tague, *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See David Starkey, 'Intimacy and Innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', in *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. by David Starkey, D.A.L. Morgan, John Murphy, Pam Wright, Neil Cuddy, and Kevin M. Sharpe (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 71-118, along with the rest of the essays in this volume. See also Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1986).

the private was also intrinsically public.<sup>6</sup> This extension of what is meant by ‘the political’ allowed the integration of women into Tudor political narratives.<sup>7</sup>

Harris’ work paved the way for a number of studies which aimed to do just this. While there are still few published histories of family groups of women, there have been several important biographies of individual aristocratic women which have explored their political activity, such as Michael Jones and Malcolm Underwood on Margaret Beaufort, and Hazel Pierce on Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury.<sup>8</sup> Distinct social classes of women, notably aristocratic women in royal courts, have also received attention. Thanks largely to the doctoral studies of Dakota Hamilton, Charlotte Merton, Helen Payne, and Sara Wolfson, we now have a detailed picture of the women of Catherine Parr, Mary I, Elizabeth I, Anne of Denmark, and Henrietta Maria’s households.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Harris and James Daybell have further argued that the early modern period represents ‘an epoch of women’s political influence’. The lack of a centralised bureaucracy at

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<sup>6</sup> For further discussion of this see Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal* 36 (1993), 383-414.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, ‘Women and Politics’. Harris has continued to explore this concept, notably in ‘The View From My Lady’s Chamber: New Perspectives on the Early Tudor Monarchy’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 60:3 (1997), 215-47; ‘Aristocratic Women and the State in Early Tudor England’ in *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England; Essays in Honour of A. J. Slavin*, ed. by Charles Carlton with Robert L. Woods, Mary L. Robertson and Joseph S. Block (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 3-24; *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550* (2002).

<sup>8</sup> Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King’s Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); Hazel Pierce, *Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, 1473-1541: Loyalty, Lineage and Leadership* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Dakota Hamilton, ‘The Household of Katherine Parr’ (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1992); Charlotte Merton, ‘The Women Who Served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth: Ladies, Gentlewomen and Maids of the Privy Chamber, 1553-1603’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990); Helen Payne, ‘Aristocratic Women and the Jacobean Court, 1603-1625’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2001); Sara Wolfson, ‘Aristocratic Women of the Household and Court of Queen Henrietta Maria, 1625-1659’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Durham, 2010). I am grateful to Dr Wolfson for allowing me access to the latter. This work yet to be done for the households of the rest of Henry VIII’s Queens. My MA thesis explored the women at the court of Henry VII; see Nicola Clark, ‘“Richly beseen”: Women at the Court of Henry VII’ (unpublished Masters thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2008).

the beginning of this period meant that the King was forced to rely on the aristocracy to operate the machinery of government through patronage, which allowed women to play a political role. The growth of Parliament and centralisation of administrative, financial and military systems of government meant that by the end of the seventeenth-century women's political opportunities had lessened considerably.<sup>10</sup> It is especially important, therefore, for the spotlight to be placed on politically-central families like the Howards during the sixteenth-century, since their position at the heart of government potentially allowed their women to assume considerable political influence with far-reaching implications.

Harris's work has precipitated a surge of interest not only in the way that women related to men and facilitated male interests, but also in women's own networks and the influence that these could have. Historians such as Karen Robertson and Laura Gowing have investigated the political implications of women's female kinship networks and friendships to show that women's networks were as important to politics as men's, a conclusion which is tested in Chapter 2 of this thesis.<sup>11</sup> The essays in James Daybell's edited collection *Women and Politics in Early Modern England 1450-1700* have been particularly influential in exploring and developing Harris's ideas. They include forays into the use of letter-writing as a political tool, women's news networks, and

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<sup>10</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 13; Daybell, Introduction to *Women and Politics*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (eds), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Laura Gowing, 'The Politics of Women's Friendship in Early Modern England', in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* ed by Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter and Miri Rubin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) pp. 131-149; Charlotte Merton, 'Women, Friendship, and Memory at the Late Tudor Court', in *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth*, ed. by Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 239-50.

manuscript culture.<sup>12</sup> Such work has shown that there are many ways in which women engaged with the political sphere: through patronage, literature, religion and even rebellion, all of which are key themes in the lives of the Howard women explored within this thesis.<sup>13</sup>

Most scholars engaged in uncovering early modern women's political agency preserve the understanding that women were operating within the constraints of a patriarchal social order and expectations. This thesis also takes this standpoint, as to do otherwise would be anachronistic. It seems clear, however, that understandings of the scope and nature of patriarchy have altered along with the definition of politics. While Lawrence Stone in the 1970s famously characterised patriarchy as 'the despotic authority of husband and father', coldly and inherently oppressive to women, scholars have since been at pains to temper this definition.<sup>14</sup> Many have found examples of strong, dominant women who were able to exercise considerable independence within the confines of patriarchy, such as Lady Honor Lisle, Katherine Willoughby-Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, or Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury.<sup>15</sup> Others have emphasised the numerous ways in which women were able to subvert or resist patriarchal authority. Anthony Fletcher's *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* remains influential in this wide field.<sup>16</sup> The work of Susan

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<sup>12</sup> James Daybell (ed.), *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See the introductions to Chapters 1, 4 and 7 for surveys of the literature in these areas.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 151-5.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 181-212; Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008); Pierce, *Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury*.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (London: Yale University Press, 1995).

Amussen and others on marriage breakdown, Tim Stretton's excellent study of women's use of the law, and the large body of work on the prominence of women in rebellion and riot have all shown that not all women lived their lives firmly constrained by an oppressive patriarchal order.<sup>17</sup> When considered alongside Harris' work it is clear that this has enormous implications for the understanding of women's political agency and particularly so for the Howards: in a family where both the men and women played prominent public roles, the nature of patriarchal control becomes key to the political operation of the family as a whole. Significantly, this thesis reveals that a number of the Howard women appeared particularly keen on subverting or resisting patriarchal authority. This thesis therefore adds to our understanding of the nature of early modern patriarchy, and argues that the public expression of intra-familial relationships could be more dynamic than previously thought.

### **Why Family?**

One of the most important aspects of this study is that all the five women concerned belonged to a single dynasty. As Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster have noted, the history of women and the history of the family do not often intersect.<sup>18</sup> Yet this is bizarre: the notion of family was the beating heart of early

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<sup>17</sup> S. D. Amussen, "'Being stirred to much unquietness': Violence and Domestic Violence in Early Modern England", *Journal of Women's History* 6:2 (1994), 70-89; Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 65-89; Timothy Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998); Arlette Farge, 'Protesters Plain to See', in *A History of Women in the West, vol. 3: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. by Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (Cambridge (MA): Belknap Press, 1993), pp. 489-505; Sharon L. Jansen, *Dangerous Talk and Strange Behavior: Women and Popular Resistance to the Reforms of Henry VIII* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Introduction to Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), pp. 1-17 (p. 15). For further discussion of this see L. A. Tilly, 'Women's history and family history: Fruitful collaboration or missed connection?', *Journal of Family History* 12 (1987), 303-15 and M. Doolittle, 'Close relations? Bringing together gender and family in English History', *Gender and History* 11:3 (1999), 542-54.

modern life. Scholars agree that the aristocracy operated on a broad definition of ‘family’ which included immediate and distant, consanguineal (blood) and affinal (marital) relatives.<sup>19</sup> Naomi Tadmor in particular has demonstrated that early modern people did not usually distinguish between half, full, and step siblings, nor between blood relatives and in-laws, and the term ‘cousin’ was used as a catch-all phrase for any more distant relations.<sup>20</sup> For the aristocracy, the family was therefore a vast patronage resource.<sup>21</sup>

The political concerns of any individual revolved around the concept of family. The accumulation of status and wealth involved inheritance, which required procreation, brought about by marriage, which was itself a form of patronage, to which kinship networks were vital. It is also clear that all of these dynastic and political concerns involved women. Yet while there have been a number of studies of particular aristocratic families, such as George Bernard’s work on the Earls of Shrewsbury, and his edited volume on the Tudor nobility, these barely touch on the women of those families.<sup>22</sup> There are remarkably few full-length studies of the women of single aristocratic families, and this is particularly the case for early modern England. Natalie Tomás’s study of the Medici women of Italy and Helen Nader’s edited collection of essays on the Spanish Mendoza women suggest that this concept is gaining ground in Europe.

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<sup>19</sup> The nature of the family and the way that this may or may not have changed over time has given rise to heated debate over the past three decades. For a recent survey of this, see the introduction to Berry and Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England*, pp. 1-17, or W. Coster, *Family and Kinship in England, 1450-1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Harris, ‘Property, Power, and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England’, *Signs* 15:3 (1990), 606-32; Cressy, pp. 38-69; Naomi Tadmor, ‘Early Modern Kinship in the Long Run’, *Continuity and Change* 25:1 (2010), 15-48 (pp. 20-1). See also Bundesen, “‘No Other Faction But My Own’”.

<sup>22</sup> G. W. Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility: A Study of the Fourth and Fifth Earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1985); *idem.* (ed), *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).



In England, however, family groups of noblewomen remain the preserve of popular works, such as Leanda de Lisle's narrative of Jane Grey and her two sisters.<sup>23</sup>

There have been a small number of articles focusing on the women of one family, and these are usually to be found within the field of letter-writing due to the nature of family archives and the dynastic information they contain.

However, such studies often approach these women from the point of view of literary rather than historical analysis, and usually focus on a sole aspect of the women's lives. Alison Wall's study of the Thynne women's letters, for instance, prioritises the difficult relationship between Maria Thynne and her mother-in-law Joan; Alison Truelove focuses on the linguistic style of the Stonor women's correspondence; Sara Jayne Steen has investigated the political agency of the Cavendish-Talbot women; and Catherine Clarke's thesis on the Russell women revolves only around their literary patronage.<sup>24</sup> This thesis covers all these areas in relation to the Howard women. Drawing many themes together, rather than focusing on one or two, allows us to fully contextualise these women's familial role, and interrogate their contribution to the family's political life.

The broad definition of 'family' meant that any family member might be called upon for patronage assistance, and for powerful dynasties like the

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<sup>23</sup> Natalie R. Tomás, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Helen Nader (ed.), *Power and Gender in Renaissance Spain: Eight Women of the Mendoza Family, 1450-1650* (Urbana and Chicago (IL): University of Illinois Press, 2004); Leanda de Lisle, *The Sisters Who Would Be Queen: The Tragedy of Mary, Katherine & Lady Jane Grey* (London: Harper Press, 2008); see also David Baldwin, *The Kingmaker's Sisters: Six Powerful Women in the Wars of the Roses* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Alison Wall, 'Deference and Defiance in Women's Letters of the Thynne Family: The Rhetoric of Relationships', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. by James Daybell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 77-93; Alison Truelove, 'Commanding Communications: the Fifteenth-Century Letters of the Stonor Women', in *idem.*, pp. 42-58; Sara Jayne Steen, 'The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High-Stakes Game', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 147-63; Catherine Clarke, 'Patronage and Literature: The Women of the Russell Family, 1520-1617' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 1992).

Howards, kinship was something in the nature of a ‘claim to fame’.<sup>25</sup> This, along with the many themes considered here, facilitates exploration of the idea of aristocratic ‘family strategy’ in politics, viewed through the prism of gender. Ralph Houlbrooke has stated that membership of a large dynasty did not necessarily transcend the interests of the individual or his immediate family, but whether this was the case for noblewomen remains unclear.<sup>26</sup> When times were good and fortunes stable, did noblewomen consistently work solely for familial benefit, or did they also have individual goals or priorities? What happened if family members had conflicting views of what the dynasty’s ambitions should be? There are very few studies of aristocratic families at times of political crisis during this period, but the Howards provide excellent scope for addressing this lack since they weathered the fall of Anne Boleyn in 1536, Catherine Howard in 1541-2, and dynastic ruin in 1485, 1546, and 1572. While these events have naturally attracted considerable scholarly attention, the emphasis has never been on the operation of the family as a whole, and it remains unclear whether families worked together to mitigate consequences or turned on one another – or a mixture of the two.<sup>27</sup> The plethora of Howard crises outlined above makes it evident that the study of Henrician politics would benefit from such scrutiny, as this would illuminate the relationship between high-status families like the Howards and the state as well as giving new insights onto certain key events of Henry’s reign. This thesis is unique in tackling several of the episodes described above from this new female, familial perspective.

Part of the reason why there are so few studies of women from a sole family may be the indisputable fact that women’s multiple dynastic identities

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<sup>25</sup> Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 6 and Epilogue for further discussion.

render this complicated. Over the course of their lives, early modern women normally accumulated several families: the one they were born into (natal family), perhaps the one they were raised in (foster family) and at least one marital family. This means that the study of women always involves the negotiation of several different families. This makes it difficult for historians to unravel women's dynastic loyalties and priorities, though patronage studies have suggested some general rules; Olwen Hufton and Sharon Kettering have shown that women were expected and able to further the interests of both natal and marital relatives, and Harris has stated that once married, women prioritised their marital families though natal relations remained important.<sup>28</sup> Studies of women's marriages, notably at times of crisis, have also given some insight into the continued importance of women's natal relations after marriage.<sup>29</sup> However, these tend to focus on women's reactions to male interests. Lisa Klein's study of Anne Clifford and her understanding of dynasty provides a useful example of a noblewoman with matrilineal priorities, but we still need a fuller appreciation of how this could affect women in political families like the Howards, and whether inter- and intra-familial loyalties were ever so clear cut. Dynastic identity and women's priorities are therefore explored in Chapters 2 and 5.<sup>30</sup>

It must also be recognised that studies of aristocratic women from one family are potentially dangerous because they are, by nature, single-gender studies. This means that historians run the risk of considering women in isolation from men, and therefore still only receiving half of the full dynastic picture. As

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<sup>28</sup> Olwen Hufton, 'Reflections on the Role of Women in the Early Modern Court', *Court Historian* 5 (2000), 1-13; Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern Noblewomen'; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 175-209.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Stretton, 'Marriage, Separation and the Common Law in England, 1540-1660' in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. by Berry and Foyster, pp. 18-39; Amussen, pp. 70-89.

<sup>30</sup> Lisa M. Klein, 'Lady Anne Clifford as Mother and Matriarch: Domestic and Dynastic Issues in Her Life and Writings', *Journal of Family History* 26 (2001), 18-38.

Kristin Bundesen has so forcefully pointed out, this is often no better than previous male-dominated studies.<sup>31</sup> However, for families like the Howards where the male narrative is already known, this is a necessary risk. The focus must inevitably be placed on the half that we are missing in order to stand any chance of obtaining the whole. Care is taken throughout the thesis to relate the female story to the existing male narrative, thus producing an entirely new picture.

Uncovering women's share in their family's political narrative is especially important for the Howard women because of the dynasty's proximity to the throne. The family's position at the heart of Henry's court has meant that an active search for political involvement, significance or impact in the lives of the Howard women has not been necessary: their identity meant that politics was a way of life, a daily lot rather than a special occasion. This is why there is no specific chapter in this thesis on the Howard women and politics. Rather, political agency is a thread woven prominently throughout each chapter. This allows the work of Harris and Daybell in extending the definition of the political and integrating women into the narrative to be put into practice. This thesis does not ask *if* the Howard women were involved in politics; it begins at the point of asking how, why, and what the consequences of political involvement were.

### **Why the Howards?**

The Howards were the highest-ranking noble family of Henry VIII's reign, because they held the dukedom of Norfolk. This dukedom was and remains first in peerage precedence, except for royal dukedoms such as York or Richmond,

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<sup>31</sup> Bundesen, pp. 9-12.

and this means that the Howards were the closest-ranking family to the Crown. Appendix A shows that there were two patriarchs during this period, both called Thomas Howard and described in this thesis as Thomas I and Thomas II to avoid confusion. Thomas I held the dukedom of Norfolk as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Howard Duke until his death in 1524, when Thomas II, his eldest son, took over as 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke. Both successively held the offices of Lord Treasurer and Earl Marshal. They and other male Howards between them held a number of other important offices, such as Lieutenant of the North, Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Admiral, and Treasurer of the Royal Household. Office-holding, in a broad sense of the word, was not limited to the family's men. Importantly for this thesis, the positions held by some of the women have received the greatest renown, most especially the two Howard Queens of England (Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard), though a Howard woman was also a royal godmother (Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk) and several were ladies-in-waiting.

During Henry's reign male and female Howards were deeply involved in many key episodes and events. To name a few, the fall of Wolsey in 1529, the King's 'Great Matter', the fall of Anne Boleyn in 1536, the Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-7, the rise and fall of Catherine Howard in the early 1540s, a number of large-scale military engagements, and religious change. This has meant that they appear in all general political histories of Henry's reign, and the two Queens have naturally been the subjects of much scholarly attention.<sup>32</sup> The family's

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<sup>32</sup> For instance, G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Methuen, 1974); J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London: Methuen, 1968); Derek Wilson, *In the Lion's Court: Power, Ambition and Sudden Death in the Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Hutchinson, 2001); David Loades, *Henry VIII: Court, Church and Conflict* (Kew: The National Archives, 2007); E. W. Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: 'The Most Happy'* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); G. W. Bernard, *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Retha M. Warnicke, 'Family and kinship relations at the Henrician court: the Boleyns and Howards', in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. by Dale Hoak (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 31-53; Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Catherine Howard* (Stroud: Amberley, 1961).

dramatic fall at the end of the reign, ending in the execution of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the imprisonment of Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, left the dynasty at a low ebb and forms a convenient end point for this thesis.

The family's especial prominence during this period is why Henry's reign has been selected for this study. Though there have been some studies of the Tudor Howards, these have either been biographical studies of the men, or have focused on the collective male narrative at the expense of the female.<sup>33</sup> Melvin Tucker's study of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and David Head's of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke remain the standard works, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, has also formed the subject of several biographies.<sup>34</sup> The Howard men's tombs in St Michael's Church, Framlingham, have undergone a number of archaeological excavations leading to publications, and they are the subject of a current Science and Heritage Programme project led by Dr Phillip Lindley.<sup>35</sup> The only aristocratic woman of the Howard family who was not a Queen to receive attention has been Jane Parker-Boleyn, Viscountess Rochford, the wife of Anne Boleyn's brother George, the subject of a popular study by Julia Fox.<sup>36</sup> As Appendix A shows, however, the Boleyn family were a satellite branch of the Howards rather than

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<sup>33</sup> Gerald Brenan and Edward Phillips Statham, *The House of Howard*, 2 vols (London: Hutchinson & co., 1907), I, Chs. 1 and 2, pp. 1-59; John M. Robinson, *The Dukes of Norfolk: A Quincentennial History* (Oxford: OUP, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> Melvin J. Tucker, *The Life of Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey and Second Duke of Norfolk, 1443-1524* (London: Mouton and Co., 1964); David M. Head, *The Ebbs and Flows of Fortune: The Life of Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995); George Frederick Nott (ed.), *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and of Sir Thomas Wyatt The Elder*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1815); E. Casady, *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (London: H. Milford, 1938); W. A. Sessions, *Henry Howard, the Poet Earl of Surrey: A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Jessie Childs, *Henry VIII's Last Victim: The Life and Times of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence Stone and Howard Colvin, 'The Howard Tombs at Framlingham, Suffolk' *Archaeological Journal* 122 (1965), 159-71; R. Marks, 'The Howard Tombs at Thetford and Framlingham: New Discoveries', *Archaeological Journal* 141 (1984), 252-68.

<sup>36</sup> Julia Fox, *Jane Boleyn: The True Story of the Infamous Lady Rochford* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007).

the direct male line. We continue to lack a collective study of the Howard women and this thesis aims to correct this omission.

### **Where did they come from?**

The Howard family were *parvenus*, who rose from gentry status to dizzying heights of aristocracy within one generation in the late fifteenth-century. The man who achieved this was John Howard, father of Thomas I and first Howard Duke of Norfolk.<sup>37</sup> As Appendix B shows, John's mother was Lady Margaret Mowbray, sister of John Mowbray, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mowbray Duke of Norfolk. This connection meant that John Howard was able to enter the service of his first cousin John Mowbray, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, rising through the ranks to become Norfolk's chamberlain and loyal retainer. This led to royal service, and John Howard became King Edward IV's treasurer in 1461. When his cousin the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk died in 1461, Howard served his successor the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke. This Duke died unexpectedly and without male heirs in 1476, leaving the Dukedom vacant until Edward IV bestowed it – and its lands – on his own son Richard, Duke of York. Anne Crawford tells us that at Edward IV's death in 1483 Howard was 'not a natural supporter of the queen [Elizabeth Woodville] and her family' and chose instead to associate himself with the King's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester.<sup>38</sup> Two days after Richard seized the throne in June of this year, he rewarded Howard for his support with the Dukedom of Norfolk and the office of Earl Marshal. He was given the Mowbray lands in East Anglia alongside others in Surrey and Sussex, and set up home at Framlingham Castle, the traditional

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<sup>37</sup> See Anne Crawford, *Yorkist Lord: John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, c. 1425-1485* (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Anne Crawford, 'John Howard, first duke of Norfolk (d. 1485), *soldier and member of parliament*', *ODNB* [accessed 5 February 2013].

seat of the Dukedom. Thus the Howards had risen from gentry to the highest rank of aristocracy within one generation.

However, on this occasion they did not hold the Dukedom for long; John Howard was killed fighting for Richard III at Bosworth in 1485 and his eldest son Thomas I, then Earl of Surrey, was immediately taken prisoner, attainted, and stripped of his titles and estates by the victorious Henry VII. Surrey was pardoned in March 1486, but remained in the Tower until the Spring of 1489.<sup>39</sup> Once released, he was restored as Earl of Surrey, but not Duke of Norfolk, and he did not regain his East Anglian lands.<sup>40</sup> Surrey was promptly sent to prove his loyalty to Henry VII as Lieutenant of the North. Roger Virgoe has shown how Surrey spent most of the rest of Henry VII's reign regaining the lands and status that the Howards had lost as a result of attainder.<sup>41</sup> By 1495 he was once more in possession of the family seat of Framlingham, along with other Howard and Mowbray lands across East Anglia and Sussex. His political position was also strong enough for him to marry his son and heir Thomas, later 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, to the Queen's sister, Anne.<sup>42</sup> By 1499 Surrey had evidently proved his worth and was recalled south. He was then made Lord Treasurer and a Privy Councillor in 1501.<sup>43</sup> By the time of the King's death in 1509 the Howards were once again wealthy, high-status, politically powerful aristocracy, and, as we have seen, proceeded to play a central role through the next reign.

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<sup>39</sup> Head, pp. 18-23.

<sup>40</sup> Many of these were granted to John de Vere, 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford; see *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> R. Virgoe, 'The Recovery of the Howards in East Anglia, 1485-1529' in *Wealth and Power in Tudor England*, ed. by E. W. Ives, R. Knecht and J. J. Scarisbrick (London: Athlone, 1978), pp. 1-20.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Head, 'Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk (1443-1524), *magnate and soldier*', *ODNB* [accessed 4 February 2013].



### **Who were the Howard women?**

While the male narrative is well known, the activities of the women of the family are not. To rectify this, five women of the Howard family have been selected for study. Those chosen are Agnes Tylney-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk (c. 1477-1545), the second wife of Thomas Howard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk (d. 1524) and two of their daughters, Anne Howard-de Vere, Countess of Oxford (c. 1498-1559) and Katherine Howard-ap Rhys-Daubeney, Countess of Bridgwater (d. 1554). Alongside these, Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, also Duchess of Norfolk (c. 1497-1558) and her daughter Mary Howard-Fitzroy, Duchess of Richmond (c. 1519- c.1555) are also considered.<sup>44</sup> These five women have been selected firstly because they have not previously formed the subject of any sustained study of this nature. Between them, they cover all the years of Henry VIII's reign and were at their most politically active during this period. Though there were a number of other women who were born into or married into the Henrician Howard dynasty, to include all of these would have made this study impossibly unwieldy as it would have taken several theses to do justice to the material. This thesis is therefore limited to five women close to the central Howard line with adequate source material to enable detailed study, and others are brought in to provide additional comparative material where appropriate.

The two Duchesses of Norfolk were selected because they were the highest-ranking women within the Henrician Howard dynasty. As the wives of the two successive family patriarchs, they provide the most equal female counterpart to the existing narrative. The three 'daughters', Anne, Katherine, and Mary, have been chosen to provide balance with the two Duchesses of Norfolk,

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<sup>44</sup> See Appendix A.

for while the Duchesses married into the Howard dynasty, the daughters were born into it, and this gives two fundamentally different female perspectives onto the family. The fact that Anne and Katherine were the daughters of Agnes, the senior Duchess of Norfolk, and Mary was the daughter of Elizabeth, the junior Duchess of Norfolk, also allows us to study both of the principle branches of the family. Though Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, had two more daughters besides Anne and Katherine (Elizabeth and Dorothy) both died early and neither left much, if any, archival trace, which means that they do not form a major part of this study.<sup>45</sup>

### **Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk**

Agnes Tylney-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, was the most senior Howard woman during this period. She married into the Howard family in 1497 at around twenty years of age, as the second wife of Thomas I, later 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk.<sup>46</sup> The Tylneys, Agnes' natal family, were Lincolnshire gentry.<sup>47</sup> The circumstances of her marriage strongly suggest that it was a love match. It occurred a mere four months after the death of Thomas I's first wife, Elizabeth, which suggests that the couple already knew one another. Agnes was in fact Elizabeth's first cousin, and her brother Philip was already in service with Thomas Howard, which might mean Agnes herself was serving her cousin within the household.<sup>48</sup> Her marriage appears to have been happy; Agnes bore at least eleven children, of whom six

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>46</sup> She gave her age in 1529 as fifty-two (TNA E30/1456).

<sup>47</sup> Cyril Bristow, *Tilney Families* (Tonbridge: published by the author, 1988). See Appendix C.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

survived, and her husband made her executrix of his will in 1524, a position denoting trust and affection.<sup>49</sup>

Agnes played a prominent ceremonial role in the courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII. In 1503 she and her husband escorted Princess Margaret to Scotland to marry King James IV, and she was the only individual to act as godparent for both Princess Mary in 1515 and Princess Elizabeth in 1533.<sup>50</sup> High-status individuals such as Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought her patronage.<sup>51</sup> From 1524 she was also chatelaine of Norfolk House in Lambeth, the family's London base, as well as enjoying jointure estates in Surrey, Suffolk, Lincoln, Essex and Sussex worth approximately £350 per annum.<sup>52</sup> Agnes fostered several Howard and Tylney relatives within her household, most famously Henry VIII's fifth Queen, Catherine Howard, and is best known to scholarship for this reason.<sup>53</sup> As Chapter 6 discusses, Catherine's pre-marital affairs within Agnes' household contributed to the attainder and imprisonment of Agnes and several other Howards in 1541. During her spell in the Tower Agnes made her will, clearly not expecting to survive.<sup>54</sup> However, she was pardoned in May 1542 and lived another three years, dying in 1545.<sup>55</sup> She is buried in the Howard chapel in St Mary's Church, Lambeth. Though Agnes is primarily remembered as a lax guardian who allowed her charges to indulge in pre-marital

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix A and John Aubrey, *The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey*, 5 vols (London: E. Curll, 1719), V, pp. 237-8; TNA PROB 11/21/345.

<sup>50</sup> John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, ed. by T. Hearne, 6 vols (London: Impensis Gul. & Jo. Richardson, 1770), IV, pp. 265-300; BL Harl. MS 3504, fol. 232; BL Harl. MS 543, fol. 128.

<sup>51</sup> BL Harl. MS 6148, fol. 44v.

<sup>52</sup> TNA PROB 11/21/345; Arundel Castle MS G1/4.

<sup>53</sup> Catharine Davies, 'Agnes Howard [née Tilney], duchess of Norfolk (*b.* in or before 1477, *d.* 1545), *noblewoman*', *ODNB* [accessed 5 February 2013]; Smith, *Catherine Howard*; David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (London: Vintage, 2004), Chs 74 and 74; David Loades, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (Stroud: Amberley, 2009), Ch. 5.

<sup>54</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*. Her will was proved on 9 November 1545.

affairs in her household, this thesis does much to alter the existing characterisation, and instead presents her as the family's reliable matriarch.

### **Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk**

Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, was Agnes' younger counterpart. She was born c. 1497 and was the daughter of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and Eleanor Percy.<sup>56</sup> In 1512 she married Thomas II, later 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, as his second wife. Her letters, written later in the 1530s, suggest that she may have married him unwillingly, as she was already happily betrothed to her father's ward Ralph Neville, later Earl of Westmorland. Her father broke this betrothal at Howard's insistence. Elizabeth is best known for her belligerence during her dramatic marriage breakdown, which forms the subject of Chapter 3 in this thesis and has received some scholarly attention.<sup>57</sup> However, her marriage appears to have been happy during the first half of Henry's reign; the couple had four or five children and she accompanied her husband to Ireland when he was appointed its Lieutenant in 1520.<sup>58</sup> During these years she served Catherine of Aragon as lady-in-waiting.<sup>59</sup> This became problematic during the late 1520s and early 1530s with the advent of the King's 'Great Matter', for Elizabeth continued to support the Queen against the rest of the Howards.<sup>60</sup> Her own marriage failed alongside the King's, a parallel discussed in Chapter 3. She lived separately from her husband in Redbourn,

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<sup>56</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>57</sup> Michael A. R. Graves, 'Elizabeth Howard [née Stafford], duchess of Norfolk (1497-1558), *noblewoman*', *ODNB* [accessed 5 February 2013]; Barbara Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style: Elizabeth Stafford and the Third Duke of Norfolk', *Journal of Social History* 15 (1982), 371-382; Sessions, pp. 41-68.

<sup>58</sup> Four children are known (Catherine, Henry, Mary, and Thomas) but Elizabeth herself claimed to have had five (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 390-390v). For Ireland, see TNA SP60/1, fols. 40, 41, 48, 65.

<sup>59</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 388-388v.

<sup>60</sup> As reported by the Spanish ambassador; *LP* IV, 6738; *LP* V, 216; *LP* V, 238.

Hertfordshire, for the rest of Henry's reign. She died in November 1558 shortly after the accession of Elizabeth I, and was buried in St Mary's, Lambeth, as directed in her will.<sup>61</sup>

### **Anne, Countess of Oxford**

Anne Howard-de Vere, Countess of Oxford, was the eldest daughter of Thomas I, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Agnes. The date of Anne's marriage (1512) suggests that she was her parents' first child, born sometime during 1498 during her father's Lieutenancy in the north.<sup>62</sup> He was recalled in 1499, and Anne would have been brought up mainly at Framlingham Castle in Norfolk. We know nothing of her life until her marriage to John de Vere, nephew and heir of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, was arranged in 1511. Oxford died in 1513, and his will shows that the marriage had taken place by September 1512.<sup>63</sup> After his death the Howards obtained the wardship of the new 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, then still a minor, and the couple were brought up together within the Howard household.<sup>64</sup> He attained his majority and took livery of his lands in 1520. Their marriage was probably officially solemnised and consummated at this point.<sup>65</sup> Oxford's freedom from wardship appears to have gone to his head, for he began behaving irresponsibly and ill-treating Anne, who struggled to manage her husband and household. Their marriage breakdown forms part of Chapter 5. The Howards and Cardinal Wolsey became involved and an ordinance was enrolled in the court of Chancery in February 1524, regulating Oxford's behaviour and sending the

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<sup>61</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285.

<sup>62</sup> This would mean she was twelve or thirteen at marriage, the age stipulated by canon law.

<sup>63</sup> TNA PROB 11/17/245.

<sup>64</sup> *LP* I, 2964 (80).

<sup>65</sup> *LP* III (i) 956.

couple back to live with Anne's father the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>66</sup> The couple were childless and Oxford died two years later in July 1526. Anne immediately became embroiled in a serious jointure dispute with his cousin and heir, Sir John Vere, now 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, which was not resolved until 1532. This gave her a sizable jointure with manors in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent, and Leicestershire.<sup>67</sup>

Anne never remarried, and lived the rest of her life peaceably on her Cambridgeshire manor of Castle Camps. She appears to have been close to her half-brother, Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and also enjoyed a strong patronage relationship with both Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, which forms part of the discussion in Chapter 1. She played no obvious role at court, but undertook custody of her niece Agnes ap Rhys when members of the Howard family, including Anne's mother and sister, were imprisoned during the fall of Catherine Howard in 1541.<sup>68</sup> She fades from the historical record after 1546 but did not die until 1559.<sup>69</sup> She left no will and was buried in Lambeth.

### **Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater**

Anne's sister Katherine, the second daughter of Thomas I, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Agnes, is the fourth woman considered in this thesis. Her birthdate is unknown. We know that she was married probably in 1522, which means that she was born probably before 1510; since we know that her two youngest surviving brothers, William and Thomas, were born in 1509 and 1510

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<sup>66</sup> BL Hargrave MS 249, fol. 226, printed as Henry Ellis, 'Copy of an Order made by Cardinal Wolsey, as Lord Chancellor, respecting the Management of the Affairs of the young Earl of Oxford', *Archaeologia* 19 (1821), 62-5.

<sup>67</sup> TNA E41/220.

<sup>68</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 283.

<sup>69</sup> *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 189-90.

respectively, this makes it likely that she was born before 1509.<sup>70</sup> Like Anne, Katherine probably spent most of her childhood at Framlingham, but does not appear in the record until her marriage with Rhys ap Griffith, son of Sir Griffith ap Rhys and grandson of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, was arranged in 1514.<sup>71</sup> The Rhys' were the most prominent gentry family in south west Wales. Katherine probably remained at home with the Howards during her betrothal, and the marriage was solemnised around 1522.<sup>72</sup>

Katherine was the most rebellious of our five women and her activities in this regard are considered in detail in Chapter 4. After the death of her grandfather-in-law Sir Rhys ap Thomas in 1525, her husband was expected to step into his offices of Chamberlain and Chief Justice of south Wales, thus effectively governing the region; instead, Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, was appointed to these roles. Revolt ensued, reaching a head in June 1529. While Ferrers imprisoned her husband, Katherine continued to orchestrate rebellion independently on his behalf. This pattern continued until Rhys' execution on a fabricated charge of treason in December 1531. This episode has understandably received attention, particularly from historians of early modern Wales, but Katherine's role has never been the focus of any study and Chapter 4 argues that she was more crucial to this rebellion than has been recognised hitherto.<sup>73</sup> It is also argued that her remarriage to Henry Daubeney, later Earl of Bridgwater, was

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<sup>70</sup> Katherine's marriage contract stated that her husband must have reached the age of fourteen before solemnisation, and this occurred in 1522; see R. A. Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family: A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> NLW, Dynevor MS A 59, quoted in Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 66-9. See Appendix E.

<sup>72</sup> In 1520 she accompanied her mother to court, suggesting continued residence with the Howards during her betrothal: BL Cotton MS Caligula D VII, fol. 240v.

<sup>73</sup> See D. Jones, 'Sir Rhys ap Thomas: a Study in Family History of Tudor Politics', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 9 (1892), 81-101 and 192-214; William Llewelyn Williams, 'A Welsh Insurrection', *Y Cymmrodor* 16 (1902), 1-94; Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 66-119; G. Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales, c. 1415-1642* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 248-57.

arranged by the Howards as a result of Katherine's rebellious behaviour. This ended, unusually, in a divorce granted by an ecclesiastical court in 1536, the mechanics and impact of which are discussed in Chapter 5. Feisty Katherine may then have become involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 on the side of the rebels, and the likelihood of this is considered alongside her Welsh rebellion in Chapter 4.

After her divorce Katherine lived in London, with a jointure income of £200 per year from estates in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, and alimony of £80.<sup>74</sup> She enjoyed an especially close relationship with her mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, who fostered Katherine's three children from her first marriage. In 1541 she became embroiled in the fall of her half-niece Queen Catherine Howard, and was imprisoned and attainted for misprision of treason.<sup>75</sup> She was not pardoned until February 1543, and the historical record becomes quiet from this point.<sup>76</sup> By the 1550s Katherine was living on the Lambeth estate of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>77</sup> Her will shows that she died in 1554 and requested burial in her mother's tomb in Lambeth.<sup>78</sup>

### **Mary, Duchess of Richmond**

The last woman of this study was Mary Howard-Fitzroy, Duchess of Richmond, who was the second and only surviving daughter of Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Elizabeth Stafford-Howard. She was born c. 1519 and spent her childhood at Tendring Hall and Hunsdon.<sup>79</sup> A marriage was arranged for her with

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<sup>74</sup> TNA SC12/25/53; TNA SP3/9, fol. 36.

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>76</sup> *LP XVIII* (i), 226 (20).

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Allen, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Lambeth* (London, 1826), p. 439.

<sup>78</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>79</sup> Pembroke College, Cambridge, MS 300, unfoliated.



Lord Bulbeck, son and heir of John de Vere, 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, but this betrothal was broken by December 1529 in favour of an alliance with Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, the King's illegitimate son.<sup>80</sup> Due to the youth of both parties – Mary was only ten – this marriage was not consummated. Mary made her court debut in the early 1530s, carrying Anne Boleyn's train at her creation as Marquess of Pembroke in September 1532.<sup>81</sup> During this time Mary was part of a literary circle at court including her brother Henry, Earl of Surrey, Thomas Wyatt, the King's niece Lady Margaret Douglas, Mary Shelton, and Lord Thomas Howard. Between them they produced the Devonshire Manuscript, a miscellany of verse into which poems were copied; Mary's role here has received some scholarly attention, and is briefly considered from a historical viewpoint in Chapter 1.<sup>82</sup>

Mary's close friendship with the King's niece, Margaret Douglas, led to trouble in 1536 when it was discovered that she had helped her friend to marry her (Mary's) half-uncle Lord Thomas Howard clandestinely.<sup>83</sup> It is argued in Chapter 6 that Mary's position as the King's daughter-in-law saved her from a treason conviction on this occasion. She was widowed very soon after this at the age of only seventeen, and returned to her father's household at Kenninghall.<sup>84</sup> She then embarked on a lengthy struggle to secure her jointure of 1000 marks from the King, who, in the wake of the Howards' disgrace over the fall of Anne Boleyn, claimed erroneously that the non-consummation of the marriage meant that it was invalid. Independent Mary's efforts to secure payment and the conflict

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<sup>80</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360); TNA SP1/111, fol. 204.

<sup>81</sup> BL Add. MS 6113, fol. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Helen Baron, 'Mary (Howard) Fitzroy's Hand in the Devonshire Manuscript', *Review of English Studies* 45 (1994), 318-335; E. Heale, 'Women and the Courtly Love Lyric: The Devonshire MS (BL Additional 17492)', *The Modern Language Review* 90 (2005), 296-313.

<sup>83</sup> TNA E36/120/65.

<sup>84</sup> *LP* XI, 163.

that this caused with her father are considered as part of a wider discussion of dynastic identity in Chapter 5.

Mary finally secured a payment of £744 10s 9d *ob* and estates in Norfolk and Warwickshire in 1539, in time to take up a position in the new Queen Anne of Cleves' household.<sup>85</sup> She was not involved in the fall of Catherine Howard in 1541-2 and spent the 1540s between Kenninghall and the court. It is argued in Chapter 7 that the generational difference between Mary and the rest of our five women became more apparent during this period, as Mary embraced the new religion and eagerly patronised emerging evangelical writers. She was closely involved in the fall of the Howards in 1546, which culminated in the execution of her brother Henry, Earl of Surrey, and the prolonged imprisonment of her father Thomas II, Duke of Norfolk. The traditional line that she deliberately helped to condemn them is reconsidered in the Epilogue. Like several of the other subjects of this thesis, Mary was less prominent during the reign of Edward VI, though we know that she spent this time raising her brother's children.<sup>86</sup> She was relieved of this duty on her father's release at Mary I's accession in 1553, and fades out of the record from this point. Her death date is unknown, and she left no will. She is buried with her husband in St Michael's Church, Framlingham.

### **The Sources**

Finding women in the historical record is often difficult. Most calendars of state papers, ambassadorial correspondence, and indeed archive catalogues were compiled by men during the twentieth-century, before the study of women was considered important; resultantly, indexes are not always entirely accurate or

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<sup>85</sup> *LP* XIV (i), 651 (29); TNA SP1/155, fol. 28.

<sup>86</sup> TNA SP10/14, fols. 45, 53.

thorough, and women were sometimes ignored in the brief descriptions of the original sources. Digitisation, however, has meant that we can now access many of these original sources and are no longer reliant on the short calendared versions. This has been particularly fruitful for the study of aristocratic women. Where a calendar might provide a mere three-line summary of a woman's letter, resources such as the State Papers Online can reveal an original three pages long. It remains the case that several archive catalogues are not geared towards finding women. This is not always the cataloguer's fault; for instance, married women during this period could not file lawsuits under their own names, which means that to find these, one must search for the woman's male relations. Even where it is easy to find aristocratic women in original sources, a woman's identity is not always clear. There could be several women with the same title, and contemporaries did not always differentiate between them. This means that it is sometimes difficult to know whether, for instance, one has found Agnes, the dowager Duchess of Norfolk, or Elizabeth, the junior Duchess.

This gives an idea of the kinds of sources which have been used for this study. Unfortunately, the Howard family archive at Arundel Castle does not hold much material on the Tudor Howards. However, the family's political position means that many letters were preserved within the state papers. Thus much of the material used in this study was neither difficult to find, nor of an unusual nature, and was largely a case of using established sources for a new purpose. Using Henry VIII's *Letters and Papers* alone, it is possible to uncover a narrative for each of our women. This has been augmented by additional letters written by the women which have survived among the Cotton Manuscripts, notably in Titus B I and Vespasian F XIII. Letters are a particularly crucial source for this study

because in the absence of diaries or compositions, they are the only way to access these women's own voices. The number of surviving letters is uneven for our five women, and in no case is it equal to the level of famous collections such as the Lisle letters. There is one surviving letter from Agnes, the senior Duchess of Norfolk; eleven from Elizabeth, the junior Duchess; fourteen from Anne, Countess of Oxford; two from Katherine, Countess of Bridgewater; and four from Mary, Duchess of Richmond. A broad scholarship on early modern women's letter-writing, led by James Daybell, has shown that letters come with a number of interpretative problems, which are considered in context in this thesis.<sup>87</sup> Almost all of the surviving letters were written to either Cardinal Wolsey or Thomas Cromwell, which is how they have been preserved in state papers. With one or two exceptions, the ministers' replies have not survived.

The lack of intra-familial letters is a challenge, but not an insurmountable one given the amount of other source material available. There are three surviving household books for the household of Thomas II, Duke of Norfolk, and Elizabeth during the 1520s, which give insight into Elizabeth's relationships and patronage.<sup>88</sup> Records of the deer park at Framlingham Castle show when and to whom Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, gave gifts of venison.<sup>89</sup> The women's frequent visits to court, or service there, open up many more useful sources; the reports of the Spanish ambassador Eustace Chapuys are anecdotally valuable, and surviving lists of court lodgings, attendance on ceremonial occasions, and of ladies-in-waiting are also useful. Surviving accounts of royal expenditure and New Year gift lists further illuminate their positions. There are Chancery

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<sup>87</sup> James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> NRO, NRS 2378, 11 D4 (1519-20); Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 49 (1523-4); Pembroke College, University of Cambridge, MS 300 (1526-7).

<sup>89</sup> BL Add. MS 27421 and Add. Ch. 17745.

lawsuits, indentures, and inventories in the National Archives. For Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, there are also some land valors taken by Crown officials after the confiscation of their lands due to attainder, and these are helpful in determining the extent and location of their estates. However, this thesis does not contain a study of the Howard women's land and estate management. There are no surviving estate accounts or even anecdotal evidence which shed any light on their actions in this area, though it is likely that like most noblewomen, they were active in this regard.

The available source material has therefore determined the structure of the thesis. Chapters are based either around key themes or important episodes in these women's lives, and are geared toward better understanding of their familial role and its impact. The central role played by patronage in the politics of this period – and the centrality of the Howards to politics –forms the subject of Chapter 1. Patronage also represents everyday life for these women and reveals them acting on behalf of themselves, their clients and their families. The chapter asks how they did this, and what forms of patronage were particularly important to the Howard women. As this chapter focuses primarily on their relationships with men, Chapter 2 is placed to counterbalance this with an exploration of the women's female networks, which reveals that the Howard women could act independently from patrilineal interests. Chapter 3 centres on the lengthiest episode of Henry's reign directly involving the Howards, the King's 'Great Matter', and considers this in the context of the extraordinary parallel between the King's own marital exploits and the breakdown of the marriage between Thomas II and Elizabeth, Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. Chapter 4 follows this example of unusual female behaviour with an investigation into the rebellions of

feisty Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater. As well as providing valuable new material on the little-studied topic of aristocratic women's rebellion, this chapter gives insight into the triangular relationship between women, their families, and the state. The marital disputes of Anne, Countess of Oxford, Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, and Mary, Duchess of Richmond, are then considered in Chapter 5, which picks up the theme of dynastic identity touched on in the previous 4 chapters. It argues that marriage problems serve to highlight the potential for women's divided loyalties between their natal and marital families, reveals the problems this could cause, and questions its impact on the women and the Howard dynasty. Chapter 6 covers three of the biggest treason cases of Henry's reign from the point of view of the Howard women involved, providing a new perspective on these events and on the development of treason law during this period. Chapter 7 considers the religious position of our five Howard women, and argues for a change to the traditional picture of the Howards as a religiously conservative family. The Epilogue then examines the role of Mary, Duchess of Richmond, in the final fall of the Howards at the end of Henry's reign.

In summary, by focusing on the hitherto-unstudied women of the Howard family, this thesis seeks to alter both the existing understanding of the Howard women themselves, and the traditional narrative of the Howard dynasty. This facilitates a more female-centric view of Henry VIII's reign. By investigating the involvement of these women in some of the most important events of the reign, it becomes possible to see that women could have considerable direct and indirect impact on their families, and on the wider political narrative. Focusing on the women of one single family breaks new ground in bringing together gender

history and the history of the family and this is one of the most important elements to this study. The thesis demonstrates that work based on the family allows a much clearer understanding of the triangular relationship between aristocratic women, their families, and the state, and this in turn extends our understanding of politics during the early modern period. It makes clear that in some cases, we no longer need to ask *whether* women were political agents, but focus our energy on understanding how, where, why, and what the consequences of such involvement were.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Patronage**

The giving, receiving, and brokering of patronage was central to politics during the early modern period. In a personal monarchy, effective personal relationships were the means to advancement, and the patronage system was key to the formation and maintenance of these relationships.<sup>1</sup> Sharon Kettering, Olwen Hufton, and Barbara Harris have emphasised the role of women in this process and have agreed that aristocratic women's exercise of patronage was important to their families' advancement.<sup>2</sup> To gain a sense of the Howard women's position within the Howard dynasty and the extent of their political activity, then, we must examine their use of patronage. What forms did this take, and were the Howard women successful patronesses? Do any of our five women particularly stand out in this regard? Who were their clients – and can this give us insight into whether they were using patronage primarily to benefit their families, as we might expect? Studies of court women have suggested that they held particular patronage power, because they were closer to the monarchs and their advisors than other noblewomen.<sup>3</sup> Was this the case for our two courtiers, Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, and Mary, Duchess of Richmond?

The spectrum of patronage was vast. It therefore boasts an enormous scholarly following, from sociologists to social, literary, art, and court historians

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<sup>1</sup> Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients*.

<sup>2</sup> Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen'; Hufton, 'Reflections on the Role of Women', pp. 1-13; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 175-209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 9, pp. 210-40; Payne, 'Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks', in *Women in Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 164-80.



each covering different aspects or forms of patronage.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, any discussion of the patronage of specific women is limited to the evidence that has survived, and we are hampered by the lack of personal account books for these women. This highlights another common problem when investigating women's patronage. Where useful forms of evidence do exist - such as the 1546 inventories of the Duke of Norfolk's house at Kenninghall which provide evidence of the family's patronage of the decorative arts – it is almost impossible to distinguish between the patronage of men and women. Catherine King has explained in reference to Italian women's patronage of architecture that while married women may well have commissioned works of art, they often did so in the name of their husbands.<sup>5</sup> Without an account of personal expenses it is similarly difficult to tell whether items in an inventory belonged to, or were bought or commissioned by, men or women living in the house. This chapter is therefore reliant on the creative use of other kinds of evidence, namely letters, anecdotes and wills, in order to infer patronage where possible.

We do, however, possess evidence for a number of other forms of patronage used by the Howard women. Chief among these are hospitality, gift-giving, and the preferment of clients to both secular and ecclesiastical office (although preferment to religious office is considered in detail in Chapter 7). All

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, S. N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand (eds.), *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development* (London: Sage, 1981); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Jane Donawerth, 'Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange', in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture*, ed. by Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 3-18; S. E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603: Women as Consumers, Patrons and Painters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Sara Chapman, 'Patronage as Family Economy: The Role of Women in the Patron-Client Network of the Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain Family, 1670-1715', *French Historical Studies* 24 (2001), 11-35; E. Chalus, "'To Serve my friends': Women and Political Patronage in Eighteenth-Century England", in *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. by Amanda Vickery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 57-88.

<sup>5</sup> Catherine King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy c. 1300-1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 1-19, 48.

of these are considered here as important means by which they were able to benefit their clients, their families, and themselves. There is also surviving evidence for the arrangement of marriage, household fostering, and godparenting. However, these are discussed in full detail in Chapter 2 due to their function as expressions of female kinship networks.

### **Hospitality**

Surviving evidence regarding noblewomen's exercise of hospitality allows us to build up a valuable picture of the composition and extent of their patronage clientele, which helps us to understand their strength as patronesses. Hospitality was a mainstay of noble life central to the principles of the nobility. As Felicity Heal explains, to be considered truly noble, one was obliged to display magnificence and magnanimity; hospitality provided an excellent opportunity to do so, as great households could act as stages for munificent display.<sup>6</sup>

Household accounts can provide an accurate picture of a family or individual's hospitality.<sup>7</sup> The format and layout of these varies, but alongside the record of what was eaten, these books often include daily lists of visitors. Three such books survive for the household of Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, two of which include a daily record of visitors. One of these covers April 1523 to January 1524, when the couple were based at Tendring Hall in Stoke by Nayland and at Hunsdon, as Earl and Countess of Surrey.<sup>8</sup> The other runs for one year beginning in September 1526, likewise at Tendring Hall, after they had become Duke and Duchess of Norfolk.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 23-4.

<sup>7</sup> See Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1200-1600* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 49, unfoliated.

<sup>9</sup> Pembroke College, Cambridge, MS 300, unfoliated.

These provide insights into the hospitality of Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Countess of Surrey and later Duchess of Norfolk, particularly because in the earlier book (1523-4) it is clear that she was managing the household alone while her husband was serving as Lieutenant of the North. During 1526-7, the period covered by the later book, he was at home alongside her. This allows us to pinpoint differences between Elizabeth and her husband's clienteles.<sup>10</sup>

The kinds of visitors found in both the Howard household books are precisely what we should expect from such high-status nobles, according to Heal's very thorough analysis.<sup>11</sup> They included kin, other nobles and their families, local gentry, household officials, workmen, clergy, travellers and their servants. It is obvious that overall visitor numbers were far higher when Elizabeth's husband was present in 1526-7 than in 1523-4 when she entertained alone. The difference – broadly speaking – lay in the visits of local gentry men; while the 1526-7 book records a steady stream of Knyvetts, Wingfields, Sheltons, Waldegraves, Jerninghams and other East Anglian gentry, the 1523-4 book is limited to Southwells, Gages, and Wattons. This strongly suggests that these men's patron was Elizabeth's husband, and not Elizabeth herself, which makes sense. As a woman and the wife of the Duke of Norfolk, she did not have as much leverage to promote them to local or national government office as her husband had, nor could she offer the various financial perks that he, as Lord Treasurer, could.<sup>12</sup> It may also suggest that Elizabeth was not perceived to be able to influence her husband, since the gentry rarely approached her as a conduit for her husband's patronage.

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<sup>10</sup> Although we should be cautious regarding differences in the level of detail recorded at different times, there appears to be enough consistency between the two books to validate a comparison.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-4.

<sup>12</sup> See Head, p. 283.

A notable absence from both books is Elizabeth's natal family.<sup>13</sup> Not a single Stafford appears to have visited Elizabeth during the two years in question. This is unusual; as Harris notes, women were expected to foster links between their natal and marital families, and thus visits from natal relatives, especially mothers and sisters, were common even when those concerned lived far away.<sup>14</sup> The 1523-4 book for example shows that in January 1524 Elizabeth's own half-sister-in-law, Katherine, Lady Rhys, visited the Howards in East Anglia all the way from her home in south west Wales. Although these books cover only two years of Elizabeth's life with the Howards, the lack of Stafford visitors nonetheless suggests that she did not maintain a close relationship to her natal kin and was not actively fostering the links between them and the Howards. Thus she was not fulfilling a central element of her patronage obligations.

However, the books show that Elizabeth excelled at offering hospitality to Howard kin. While her husband was absent in August 1523, Elizabeth hosted a feast in her own chamber for her parents-in-law the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk (Thomas I and Agnes), and their children Anne, Countess of Oxford, Elizabeth, Dorothy, and Thomas, along with her aunt-in-law Lady Wyndham. The reason for this gathering is unclear, although it hints at a family celebration. Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas I and Agnes, married Henry Radcliffe, the future Earl of Sussex, at some point between this feast in August 1523 - where she is described simply as 'my Lady Elizabeyth' - and before her father's death in May 1524.<sup>15</sup> It seems possible that this feast was provided to celebrate either her betrothal or its impending solemnisation. It is not clear why Elizabeth Stafford-

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> In his tomb elegy Elizabeth is described as married to Viscount Fitzwalter's son and heir; J. Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (London: Thomas Harper, 1631), pp. 834-40.

Howard, Countess of Surrey, rather than the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, hosted this occasion, particularly when her husband was absent, but it clearly demonstrates good relations between the two branches of the family. Elizabeth also extended continual hospitality to her husband's aunts, Ladies Wyndham and Timperley, and to her half-sister-in-law Anne, Countess of Oxford, who stayed with Elizabeth to escape marital problems.<sup>16</sup> Clearly a noblewoman's household could offer a refuge to kin, and Elizabeth was keen to offer patronage to other members of the Howard dynasty.

The 1523-4 book further reveals Elizabeth's own connections made during her time at court. Across the year, several of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting visited her. While several were also distant Howard kin, and might therefore have visited in that capacity rather than as court friends, Ladies Parr and Gray, and Mistress Parker, with 'another of the Queen's maids', all visited during this year.<sup>17</sup> The books also show that Elizabeth herself continued to visit court regularly, perhaps suggesting that she continued to serve set periods as a lady-in-waiting 'extraordinary'.<sup>18</sup> Not only does this reveal a probable friendship network maintained by Elizabeth through hospitality, but it is likely that this kind of court network would also have been of use to Elizabeth's husband as a source of news and patronage.

Without household accounts for the rest of the women of this study it is almost impossible to gain a similar understanding of patronage clienteles evidenced through hospitality. However, it is clear that Elizabeth, at least, was largely acting as we would expect for a noblewoman of her status. She used

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<sup>16</sup> For further discussion of this, see Chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup> Bancroft Library MS UCB 49, unfoliated.

<sup>18</sup> This term was given to women who were not daily, salaried attendants, but who visited on special occasions or when they came to town.

hospitality to foster close ties to other members of the Howard dynasty, which would help the dynasty to assist one another in a political context, and maintained her connections to the Queen's household. She also entertained some local gentry in her husband's absence, though many members of his clientele did not visit when Elizabeth was there alone. The most surprising aspect of Elizabeth's own hospitality is the lack of Stafford relatives as visitors, which suggests that she did not use hospitality to foster links between her natal and marital families. It is possible, though not provable, that this was the choice of the Staffords, and not of Elizabeth; if so, this perhaps suggests that they did not consider her a particularly useful patroness. This might be symptomatic of poor relations between the two families after Elizabeth's father-in-law, the Duke of Norfolk, sat on the jury of peers which convicted Elizabeth's father, Edward, Duke of Buckingham, of high treason for allegedly conspiring to take the throne in 1521.<sup>19</sup> Though this is inferred and cannot be proven, it highlights the ways in which noblewomen's hospitality could give insights into the political relations between noble families at this time.

### **Preferment**

Preferment, or the promotion of family members, clients and friends to offices or other benefits, was another essential element of patronage for early modern noblewomen. Whilst sometimes the favour in question was within a patroness's own gift, such as an ecclesiastical benefice to which she held the rights, this was not always the case; noblewomen were often obliged to recommend their clients to somebody in a higher position. This has been described by Kettering as

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<sup>19</sup> For more on this see Head, pp. 53-4, and C. S. L. Davies, 'Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham (1478-1521), magnate', *ODNB* [accessed 11 February 2013].

‘brokerage’, where individuals acted as the middlemen in a chain of patronage.<sup>20</sup>

In this way noblewomen could function as conduits for royal or aristocratic patronage. Consideration of the Howard women’s use of preferment not only reveals the patronage that they held within their own gift, but shows where these women were placed as brokers within a broader chain of patronage. Who were their clients – were they members of the Howard women’s personal affinity, their husband’s, or the family’s as a whole, or is it difficult to make that distinction? What were they able to obtain for these clients? Moreover, who were the Howard women’s own patrons to whom they preferred their clients, and what can this tell us about the way these women were viewed by those with political power?

Once again, it is clear that the preferment of kin was a priority. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, lent money to her son-in-law Henry Radcliffe, Lord Fitzwalter, in 1535, and fostered young female members of the Howard and Tylney families, several of whom landed positions at court.<sup>21</sup> The preferment of young female relatives to the Queen’s household was understood by some contemporaries as a particularly feminine form of patronage. John Husee, the London agent of the Calais-based Lisle family, wrote to his mistress Lady Honor Lisle in 1537 that he thought it was chiefly the business of Honor’s female friends to secure her daughters court appointments, and that it was not ‘meet’ for any men to interfere.<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Merton has also shown how places in Queens’ households tended to be filled on the personal recommendation of ladies already thus connected.<sup>23</sup> Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, though not a salaried lady-in-waiting ‘ordinary’, had close connections to the court and the royal

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<sup>20</sup> Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers and Clients*, Ch. 2, pp. 40-67.

<sup>21</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 252.

<sup>22</sup> *Lisle Letters* IV, 896.

<sup>23</sup> Merton, ‘Women, Friendship and Memory’, in *Tudor Queenship*, ed. by Hunt and Whitelock, pp. 1-21.

family. Thus although there is no direct evidence that she was personally responsible for the appointment of her fosterees Catherine Howard and Katherine Tylney to Anne of Cleves' household, it does seem likely that she was involved. The relevance of this to the Howard dynasty is evident; Catherine Howard's position at court brought her to Henry VIII's attention, catapulting the Howards into a powerful position.

The Howard women also preferred members of their households to higher positions. Both Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and Anne, Countess of Oxford, presented their chaplains to benefices.<sup>24</sup> In doing this, these women acted both as patrons and as brokers. Where they held the right to distribute a benefice, they did so without reference to any higher power, as Anne did for the church of Knapton in Norfolk, but where they sought a benefice outside their own gift, they had to apply to the person who held it, as Agnes did for Chevening in Kent.<sup>25</sup> The Howard women also helped to prefer members of their relatives' households. In 1536, the unexpected death of Mary's husband Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, left his household unemployed. Several of his household servants came to Mary's mother Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, for assistance, and she wrote to Cromwell on their behalf, asking that he find them suitable situations.<sup>26</sup>

The surviving evidence suggests that it was for the patronage of Wolsey and Cromwell that the Howard women most often acted as brokers. We must of course recognise that the evidence is corrupted by the relatively complete survival rate of correspondence in the State Papers compared with the paucity of

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<sup>24</sup> TNA SP1/96, fol. 136; BL Harl. MS 6148, fol. 32; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of Norfolk*, 11 vols (London: W. Holden, 1811), VIII, pp. 132-5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>26</sup> TNA SP1/106, fol. 219.



material elsewhere. As such we should not assume that Wolsey and Cromwell were their only patrons. Close analysis of these women's relationship to their patrons must nonetheless rest on their letters to Wolsey and Cromwell. We know that all five women knew Wolsey, or Cromwell, or both personally through service or visits to court, and thus letters written to them were an expression of a face-to-face relationship. Though their letters contain the same elements of entreaty and salutation as any written petition, they also include personal references; Agnes knew Wolsey's retinue sufficiently well to be able to name which of his servants she had seen in 1528, and Elizabeth wrote to Cromwell in 1536 that if he failed to secure her a better financial settlement, she would 'thyuncke now faute in yow'.<sup>27</sup> In 1534, Anne, Countess of Oxford, wrote to Cromwell to say that she was sorry she had not had more time to see him in London, because she had wanted to prove to her mother Agnes that he was as good a patron as Lord Chancellor Audley.<sup>28</sup> While this does not suggest that they expected success from their suits as a matter of course, it shows that they were very comfortable in this high-class patronage arena and enjoyed positive, personal relationships with their patrons.

This may well have affected their success rate as patronesses and brokers. Naturally not every suit was successful, and notable failures for the Howard women include Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk's continued imprisonment and poor financial position throughout the 1530s, despite numerous pleas to Cromwell, and Anne, Countess of Oxford's anger at Cromwell's support for a tenant whom she had evicted in 1536.<sup>29</sup> There are also a number of suits made by the Howard women to which we do not know the outcome. However, these are

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<sup>27</sup> TNA SP1/50, fol. 83; BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 388-388v.

<sup>28</sup> TNA SP1/88, fol. 83.

<sup>29</sup> For more on Elizabeth's situation see Chapter 3. For Anne's suit, TNA SP1/97, fol. 51.

outnumbered by those instances where their suits were successful, and this was particularly the case for Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk. Her suit for a Lincolnshire benefice for her priest, Christopher Rookes, in 1535 provides an excellent example of her patronage power. Agnes had petitioned Cromwell for the benefice of Sherrington, and had sent her priest Rookes to the Bishop of Lincoln to back up her request.<sup>30</sup> The Bishop, however, claimed that the benefice was his to bestow, and not Cromwell's or the King's, and that Agnes' client was 'but a bare clerke and of slendre lerenyng'.<sup>31</sup> First Cromwell, and then the King, insisted that he install Rookes regardless and the Bishop was forced to give in.<sup>32</sup> Agnes was acting here as a broker, since this benefice was not in her own gift, but this nevertheless reveals her considerable patronage power as her apparently inferior client was preferred. There is an implication in this and several other suits that Agnes' status and patronage power made it difficult for others to move successfully against her.

A letter from Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer also provides testament to Agnes' key position as a patronage broker with the King. In 1533 he wrote to ask her to 'cause sune of your speciall frendes nyght aboute the kynges highnes' to promote the suit of his servant Thomas Cade, who needed a license to allow his deputy to carry out an office in Calais on his behalf.<sup>33</sup> Cranmer wrote that he would himself have preferred the man's suit, 'onlesse of late I hadd not byn very importune unto his highnes for sundry matires concernyng myself wherby even nowe I am the mort unaple to sue in this behalf'. He had run out of

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<sup>30</sup> TNA SP1/95, fol. 102.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; TNA SP1/96, fol. 136; *LP IX*, 454-4.

<sup>32</sup> *LP IX*, 471.

<sup>33</sup> BL Harl. MS 6148, fols. 44-44v.

patronage ‘credit’ with the King. That he would ask Agnes to further his suit clearly shows that she was understood to be a key patronage player at court.

Her personal patronage power would also have increased after her widowhood in 1524, as this gave her greater economic and social independence; her husband’s will not only made her chatelaine of Norfolk House, but also gave her access to the income from the rest of her jointure lands, as well as the majority of his movable goods.<sup>34</sup> Other Howard women, though, were also considered powerful patronesses. As noted earlier, servants of the late Duke of Richmond chose to seek the preferment of Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, after Richmond’s death and the dispersal of his household in 1536. Anne, Countess of Oxford, was also evidently considered something of a local patronage broker for Cromwell during the 1530s; his secretary Sir Ralph Sadler suggested in 1531 that he let her servant know that ‘ye be well cotentyd wt hyr frendshipe towards yours in thes parts’, and that ‘shew is where shew louys ryght frendly’.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that the Howard women were considered important sources of preferment by their clients, and that like most noblewomen, they preferred their own, their family’s and sometimes other peoples’ clients. In doing so, they acted both as patronesses and as patronage brokers with their own patrons, notably Wolsey and Cromwell. For Agnes in particular, the evidence shows that her suits were generally successful and that others, powerful patrons in their own right, considered her an effective broker at the highest level. Thus we see the Howard women exercising political agency through patronage in ways which were clearly advantageous for the whole dynasty.

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<sup>34</sup> TNA PROB 11/21/345. For further discussion of widowhood, see Chapter 5.

<sup>35</sup> TNA SP1/237, fol. 79.

## Gift Giving

Gift-giving was a major material expression of patronage relationships, and has amassed a large historiography. Scholars have followed and expanded upon the theory of gifting initially proposed by French sociologist Marcel Mauss. He posited that gifts were part of a system of reciprocal exchange; they could be given in exchange for a service, and receiving a gift placed the recipient in the giver's debt.<sup>36</sup> In the early modern period, gifts were given to reinforce a request, or to build up 'credit' for future requests, and they could take many forms.<sup>37</sup> There is a wealth of individual studies on particular forms of gifts, such as food, jewellery, or books, showing how different kinds of gifts could carry different connotations.<sup>38</sup> Analysis of the Howard women's gifting, therefore, provides insight not only into their clienteles, but into the nature of their patronage relationships, and the way that they chose to present themselves and the dynasty in public.

For our Howard women the occasional account book, letters, and accounts of gifts received by others are the principle sources but they probably only represent a fraction of the extent of their gifting. Nevertheless it is possible to outline the kinds of gifts given, to whom, and for what reason. A valuable

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<sup>36</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*. See also Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972); Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving* (Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*; Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Configurations of Exchange* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Felicity Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 199:1 (2008), 41-70; Marcia Pointon, 'Women and their Jewels', in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 11-20; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Beyond the market: books as gifts in sixteenth-century France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 33 (1983), 69-88; Donawerth, 'Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange', in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture*, ed. by Burke, *et al.*, pp. 3-18; Lisa M. Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997), 459-493.

source for Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, is the account of Richard Parker, keeper of the deer park at Framlingham, which runs from 1509-1513 and 1515-20.<sup>39</sup> These provide a list of the deer given by the Howards to their clients and include deer gifted by Agnes. The accounts show the family at a prosperous period, during which their political influence grew and they regained the Dukedom of Norfolk. Venison was a special gift: the preserve of the nobility who were rich enough to afford deer parks, it carried marks of status and privilege. The keeper's accounts show that venison was used by the Howards as a gift for local gentry, family friends, favoured household servants, clergy, and of course, other nobles. The account records most of these gifts of venison as commanded by Agnes' husband, the Earl of Surrey and later Duke of Norfolk, and only a few were specifically recorded as given by Agnes. However, this does not necessarily mean that Agnes was less active in the gifting of venison than her husband; her commands may simply have been relayed by him, and thus recorded as his desire. Where the account does specify that venison was gifted at Agnes' commandment, it shows she gave it to male and female members of local gentry families, such as William Bucknam and Lady Capell; her own servants, such as Robert Hogon; and local clergymen.<sup>40</sup> In the case of Lady Capell, the gift may have been a condolence in the form of a funeral offering, as her husband Sir William Capell had recently died. This pattern of gifting is not unusual, and mirrors that of her husband in the same account.

As Felicity Heal tell us, food gifts carried particular connotations of social dialogue because they were consumable. Once the item was eaten, the giver was within her rights to send another, thereby initiating a 'continuing

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<sup>39</sup> BL Add. MS 27421, fols. 11-25; BL Add. Ch. 17745.

<sup>40</sup> BL Add. MS 27421, fol. 21, and BL Add. Ch. 17745, unfoliated.

dialogue' between herself and her recipient.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, gifts of food could carry a particularly personal connotation when made by the giver; Lady Honor Lisle, for instance, became known for her quince jam, which was much appreciated by Henry VIII in 1539.<sup>42</sup> Of our five women, Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, recorded that she had sent almond butter and wafers to her sister's family in the late 1530s, and partridges to Thomas Cromwell; Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, sent cakes to Princess Mary in 1544 and brawn to Anne of Cleves in 1539.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, food gifts were not the most common form of gifting among the Howard women. This may be due to their status; they may have felt that other, more precious gifts were more commensurate with their nobility (venison excepted), and might stand out better amongst gifts given by lower status clients. Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, did exhibit one use for food gifts when in 1531 she sent Catherine of Aragon poultry and an orange, within which was concealed a message from Gregory Cassales, the King's papal envoy.<sup>44</sup> The letter was clearly the 'real' gift, and it seems possible that Elizabeth chose food as a means of concealment because its more ordinary status would excite less interest.

Instead of food, the Howard women tended to give expensive decorative items, such as spice boxes, carving knives and tablets of gold.<sup>45</sup> They also gave gifts of jewellery, but the surviving evidence suggests that these were primarily

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<sup>41</sup> Heal, 'Food Gifts', p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> *Lisle Letters*, V, 1620.

<sup>43</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 389; TNA SP1/158, fol. 201; BL Royal MS 17 B, xxviii, fol. 119; TNA E101/422/15.

<sup>44</sup> *LP* IV, 6738.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, gave Princess Mary a silver and gilt spice box in 1544 (BL Royal MS 17B, xxviii, fol. 114) and Cromwell a pair of carving knives in 1535 (TNA SP1/91, fol. 23). Mary, Duchess of Richmond, gave the King a tablet of gold at New Year in 1534 (TNA E101/421/13).

given to kin.<sup>46</sup> These were all things which the recipient might use or see daily, thus serving as a constant reminder of the giver. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, appears to have been particularly creative in her choice of gifts, as the King's New Year gift lists show. In 1532, she sent him 'the byrthe of o[u]r lord in a box', probably a carving of a nativity scene, and in 1534 she sent 'a table of nedilworke wrought w<sup>t</sup> golde and silke'.<sup>47</sup> Dagmar Eichberger also records that Agnes sent Margaret, Duchess of Savoy, a 'jardin clos' made out of embroidered silk flowers, with figures of the holy family in the middle.<sup>48</sup> Although the accounts do not tell us whether Agnes had made these gifts herself, it is possible that she had. If so, they were far more individual and personal than gifts of food, and they were also specifically gendered. Men did not give gifts of needlework, much as women rarely gave gifts of books.<sup>49</sup> Needlework sewn by the giver, moreover, carried connotations of service; as Lisa Klein has pointed out, it suggested that even the giver's free time was spent in the patron's service.<sup>50</sup>

The available evidence for the Howard women's gift giving undoubtedly points to the high status and high patronage power of these women. Rather than giving simple, homely gifts such as homemade food items, they appear to have preferred to give expensive, noble gifts. These were not exotic or outlandish gifts, such as the parrot given to Princess Mary by the Countess of Derby in 1538, but were thoughtful and demonstrated 'good taste'.<sup>51</sup> Certainly Agnes in particular appears to have been creative and prudent with her gifts. This is

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<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth sent a gold ring to her sister Catherine, Countess of Westmorland, in 1540 (TNA SP1/158, fol. 201); Katherine left rings of amethyst and gold to her granddaughter Mary in her will (TNA PROB 10/27).

<sup>47</sup> TNA E101/420/15, fol. 4v; TNA E101/421/13.

<sup>48</sup> Dagmar Eichberger, 'The Culture of Gifts. A Courtly Phenomenon from a Female Perspective', in *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York; Margaret of Austria*, ed. by Dagmar Eichberger (Davidsfonds and Leuven: Brepols, 2005), pp. 287-96 (p. 289).

<sup>49</sup> Donawerth, 'Women's Poetry', p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', p. 664.

<sup>51</sup> BL Royal MS 17 B, xxviii, fol. 41.

commensurate with what we have already uncovered regarding her successful patronage. While others deluged their patrons with gifts in what were usually desperate and insistent attempts to secure their service, termed by Pierre Bourdieu as the ‘symbolic violence’ of gift exchange, the Howards demonstrated an appropriate level of restraint.<sup>52</sup> Again, we are left with the impression that perhaps these women’s status and positions meant that they did not need to go to such lengths to secure patronage, and that they used gift exchange with appropriate taste and circumspection.

### **Patronage of Arts**

It is difficult to discuss the Howard women’s patronage of the arts in any depth, because the kinds of source which would provide such evidence – book dedications, books owned by these women, personal account books of expenses, building accounts, or inventories – generally do not survive for the Howard women. However, this does not mean that they were not involved in this area. Scholars such as Susan James have shown that women of their high status were obliged to participate in the patronage of the arts in order to be taken seriously within their social class, as the arts became increasingly fashionable across Henry’s reign.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, we know that the male Howards were certainly involved in artistic patronage. The inventory of Kenninghall taken in 1547 shows that Norfolk had a collection of twenty-eight portraits of ‘dyverse noble persons’.<sup>54</sup> He himself was painted by Holbein, and his son Henry, Earl of Surrey, boasts the distinction of being the most painted man in Henry VIII’s

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<sup>52</sup> See Klein, ‘Your Humble Handmaid’, pp. 466-8.

<sup>53</sup> James, *The Feminine Dynamic*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>54</sup> TNA LR2/115.



England.<sup>55</sup> Norfolk also built his great house of Kenninghall in the late 1520s, though no evidence survives as to his level of involvement in the design.

Patronage of the arts could hold significant political and social resonance, not least by demonstrating both the patrons' wealth and cultural learning and thus marking them out as people who moved in the most fashionable circles. This fulfilled the increasing requisite activities of their social group.

It was once thought that either Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, or Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, was the patroness of the poet John Skelton during the 1520s, and some historians continue to propagate this myth.<sup>56</sup> This is because, as Melvin Tucker's valuable 1969 article explained, Skelton's autobiographical poem 'The Garland of Laurel' lauds the praises of a Countess of Surrey. The poem's publication date was 1523, at which point the Countess of Surrey was Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, later Duchess of Norfolk.<sup>57</sup> However, literary historians have since argued that the poem was composed some time earlier, during the early 1490s, under the patronage of Agnes' predecessor Elizabeth Tylney, then Countess of Surrey.<sup>58</sup> While this gives no insight into the arts patronage of our five women, it does show that the Howards possessed a tradition of literary patronage.

Only one of the Howard women appears to have continued this tradition. Mary, Duchess of Richmond, the youngest of our women, was part of the court circle responsible for the compilation of the Devonshire Manuscript, a collection

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<sup>55</sup> Roy Strong, *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits*, 2 vols (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1969), I, p. 307.

<sup>56</sup> Head, pp.; 263-4; Davies, 'Agnes Howard [née Tilney], duchess of Norfolk', *ODNB* [accessed 12 February 2013]; Hutchinson, *House of Treason*, p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Melvin Tucker, 'The Ladies in Skelton's 'Garland of Laurel'', *Renaissance Quarterly* 22 (1969), 333-45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; Greg Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), pp. 15-23.

of verse miscellany put together during the 1530s.<sup>59</sup> Others involved included Mary's brother Henry, the poet Earl of Surrey; Thomas Wyatt, another poet; and Mary's friends Lady Margaret Douglas and Mary Shelton. Poems written by Surrey and Wyatt, as well as extracts from Chaucer and other medieval writers, were copied into the manuscript and annotated by those involved. Colin Burrow has described it as 'the richest surviving record of early Tudor poetry and of the literary activities of 16th-century women', and it is also the first sustained example of men and women writing together at this time.<sup>60</sup> Thus it has received considerable attention from literary historians, who generally agree that Mary was probably the original owner and circulator of the manuscript, because her initials (MF for Mary Fitzroy) are stamped into its cover.<sup>61</sup> Her only other contribution, however, was to copy her brother's poem 'O Happy Dames' into the manuscript, probably in 1541.<sup>62</sup> This shows that Mary, at least, was definitely participating in the fashionable literary activity of Henry's court. She is also the only Howard woman whom we know was definitely painted by court artist Holbein; the surviving pencil sketch depicts her wearing a fashionable hat augmented with an ostrich feather.

There is, however, indirect evidence to suggest that Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, undertook some architectural patronage. Her will asks that she be buried in the Howard chapel in Lambeth, 'in suche place whereas I haue prepared my Tombe'. This somewhat ambiguous phrasing may suggest that she

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<sup>59</sup> BL Add. MS 17492. This is currently the subject of a Wikibooks online digitisation project.

<sup>60</sup> Colin Burrow, "How to Twist a Knife," *London Review of Books* 31.8 (2009), 3-5.

<sup>61</sup> See Baron, pp. 318-335; Heale, pp. 296-313; Elizabeth Heale, *The Devonshire Manuscript: A Woman's Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>62</sup> Baron, p. 329.

had designed her own tomb, a form of patronage often undertaken by women.<sup>63</sup>

Though the tomb no longer survives, antiquarian accounts state that it was an altar-tomb, set in the middle of the chapel with a brass plate on top including an image of Agnes and armorial detail.<sup>64</sup> It is not clear whether it was a double tomb, intended to house both Agnes and her husband Thomas I, whose remains had been moved from Thetford Priory to the church at Framlingham at the dissolution. Since it did eventually house both Agnes and her daughter Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater, this seems possible.<sup>65</sup> It also seems likely that Agnes was the patroness behind the building of the Howard chapel in St Mary's Church at Lambeth, and not her husband as is usually stated.<sup>66</sup> In her will, Agnes refers to it as '*my chapple at Lambith*', as do the surviving churchwarden accounts throughout the sixteenth-century.<sup>67</sup> Thus it is clear that two out of our five Howard women were participating in the patronage of the arts, and it remains probable that the other three were also doing so.

### **Receiving Royal Patronage**

We have already considered several examples of patronage received by the Howard women, and have discussed their success as brokers and patronesses. Royal patronage, however, deserves attention in its own right, as this gives a clear impression of the way in which the Howard women were perceived by those at the top of the patronage pile. New Year gifts provide an excellent barometer of royal favour. There are four extant lists for Henry's reign, for the

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara J. Harris, 'The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women the Care of the Dead, 1450-1550', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009), 308-35; King, pp. 7-8.

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Lysons, *Environs of London*, 5 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1792), I, p. 286.

<sup>65</sup> As specified in Katherine's will: TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>66</sup> *Survey of London* 23, p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> *Lambeth Churchwardens' Accounts 1504-1645 and Vestry Book 1610*, 2 vols, ed. by Charles Drew, *Surrey Record Society* 18 (1941), I, pp. 73-4.

years 1528, 1532, 1534 and 1539.<sup>68</sup> Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, is listed on all four; she both gave and received gifts, including the carved nativity and the needlework discussed above. Elizabeth, the junior Duchess of Norfolk, gave and received gifts in 1528, 1532 and 1534, but not 1539, which is what we might expect. By 1539 she had been refusing the King's command to return to her husband for approximately five years, and it is not surprising that she was no longer a recipient of royal favour.<sup>69</sup> Anne, Countess of Oxford, is not listed in any year; Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, features only in 1539; Mary, Duchess of Richmond, only in 1534. In all cases this makes sense. Anne, though she visited court, never served there, and spent much of her time on her estate in Cambridgeshire. This might also be why Katherine does not feature on the lists until 1539, because all three of the previous lists had seen her living either in Wales or in Somerset. By 1539 she was living in London close to her mother, and her inclusion on this New Year list shows that she had gained access to court.<sup>70</sup> Mary's inclusion in 1534 was evidently a reflection of her court service, which began in 1532.<sup>71</sup> Her exclusion in 1539 may be due to her continued attempts to persuade the King to pay her jointure after the death of her husband, his son Henry Fitzroy. As Chapter 5 explains, the King did not take kindly to Mary's persistence. It may also be because she was living at Kenninghall rather than at court at this time.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> TNA E101/420/4 (this only lists the gifts given by, and not to, the King); TNA E101/420/15; TNA E101/421/13; Folger Shakespeare Library, MS Z. D. II, printed in Maria Hayward, 'Gift Giving at the Court of Henry VIII: the 1539 New Year's Gift Roll in Context', *Antiquaries Journal* 85 (2005), 125-175.

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>70</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 280.

<sup>71</sup> BL Add. MS 6113, fol. 70.

<sup>72</sup> TNA SP1/135, fol. 76.

Some of our women also received jewels as gifts from female members of the royal family. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, received ‘a pair of beyds of jassinge gauded wt golde’ from Jane Seymour in 1537, and Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, was given ‘a Broche wt a morren in a garnet set in golde’ by Princess Mary.<sup>73</sup> Mary, Duchess of Richmond, and Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, were both sent venison by Queen Katherine Parr when they were not at court.<sup>74</sup> I would argue that the women’s receipt of material patronage of this kind was connected to their regular appearance or service at court; both Duchesses of Norfolk and Mary, Duchess of Richmond were at court far more frequently than either Anne or Katherine, and this is clearly reflected in the patronage they received. Attendance at court, indeed, was itself a form of royal patronage. Both Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, and her daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, served as ladies-in-waiting ‘ordinary’, Elizabeth to Catherine of Aragon, and Mary to Anne Boleyn and Anne of Cleves. Consequently, they were entitled to lodging at court and attended many important royal occasions.<sup>75</sup> Agnes, the senior Duchess of Norfolk, was also pre-eminent here. Though never a salaried lady-in-waiting, she served as a lady-in-waiting ‘extraordinary’, attending court whenever she was in town. Further, as the senior Duchess of Norfolk, she was present at royal christenings, banquets, weddings and coronations throughout Henry’s reign, and was entitled to lodging on the Queen’s side when she visited court.<sup>76</sup> She was also chosen as godmother to both Princesses.<sup>77</sup> This was a

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<sup>73</sup> BL Royal MS 7 C xvi, fol. 19v; BL Royal MS 17 B xxviii, fol. 137.

<sup>74</sup> TNA SP1/195, fol. 173; TNA E315/161, fol. 185.

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth: *LP* IV, 1939, pp. 865 & 866 (court lodging 1526); BL Harl. MS 3504, fol. 232 (Princess Mary’s christening, 1515); BL Add. MS 21116, fol. 40 (royal banquet, 1517). Mary: BL Add. MS 6113, fol. 70 (Anne Boleyn’s creation as Marquess of Pembroke, 1532); TNA SP1/155, fol. 21v (attendance on Anne of Cleves, 1539).

<sup>76</sup> BL Add. MS 6113, fol. 79v (Prince Henry’s christening, 1511); BL Harl. MS 3504, fol. 232 (Princess Mary’s christening, 1515); BL Add. MS 21116, fol. 40 (royal banquet, 1517); *LP* VI, 212 (royal banquet, 1533); *LP* IV, 1939 (court lodging, 1526).

significant role. Coster has argued that godparenthood was as much about fostering links between the godparents and the natural parents as it was about providing networks for the child, and speaks volumes that the Crown was happy to foster closer ties to Agnes and the Howards in both 1515 and 1533.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Howard women were powerful and successful patronesses, valued by their clients both up and down the social scale. We saw that their requests were often granted above those of others in a competitive situation, which suggests that their status made them effective suitors and brokers. Indeed, status and patronage functioned in cyclical fashion for these women; their high status allowed them to cultivate personal relationships with powerful patrons such as Wolsey and Cromwell, or even the royal family, thereby augmenting the success of their suits which in turn attracted more clients. This bolstered the patronage prestige of the women themselves, and the Howard dynasty. The way that the Howard women used patronage appears prudent and appropriate to women of their station. They did not bombard patrons with requests or gifts, or, as far as the evidence shows, prefer unsuitable clients. They did not give cheap gifts, or overtly outlandish objects, but offered expensive, thoughtful gifts. This suggests that they valued their position within the patronage pecking order, and used the system wisely in order to benefit themselves, their clients, and their families. The reputation that these women

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<sup>77</sup> BL Harl. MS 3504, fol. 232; BL Harl. MS 543, fol. 128.

<sup>78</sup> Will Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 144-50. See also Chapter 2.

held as successful patronesses undoubtedly reflected well on the rest of the dynasty, and may have functioned as a form of credit in political society.

Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, stands out as an especially valuable patroness for her clients and her family. High status individuals such as Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, relied on her patronage power. Her gifts were the most obviously original and thoughtful, and may often also have been handmade as a mark of personal regard. Others found it particularly difficult to compete against her for patronage. Her access to the royal court, and the relationships of trust that she built with members of the royal family through patronage, undoubtedly stood her and her family in good stead both locally and nationally. This does much to alter the prevailing picture of Agnes as the Howard woman who let the family down by allowing her young ward, Catherine Howard, to frolic with young men whilst in her household during the late 1530s, thus rendering her future marriage to the King null and void, and plunging the family into ruin. The truth or otherwise of this is considered further in Chapter 6. What this chapter has shown is that up until this point, Agnes was in fact one of the Howard dynasty's greatest assets. Her access to and use of patronage meant that she was a reliable matriarch, as important to the furtherance of the family's aims as any of her male relatives, and this clearly highlights the need for the study of noblewomen within a familial context.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Female Kinship Networks**

This chapter examines the female kinship networks of our five Howard women in order to situate the women more clearly within the Howard dynasty, and further our understanding of their contribution to the family's goals. Our understanding of the dynastic roles women played usually comes from source material which prioritises women's interactions with men, thus creating an impression of women primarily serving patrilineal interests.<sup>1</sup> This has traditionally meant that the relationships between early modern women, including those of the Howards, have been somewhat overlooked. Yet kinship networks are known to have been vital to the political ambitions and success of families at court and in the locality, for as scholars such as David Cressy and Sharon Kettering have demonstrated, the surest way to secure office and other benefits in the sixteenth-century was to use influential family connections.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of early modern women have taken this further and shown that female kinship networks were particularly useful in this regard both for women themselves, and for their families. Karen Robertson's study of Elizabeth Throckmorton-Raleigh's use of female kin to bolster her petitions reveals that female networks were perceived to be as, if not more, influential than male kin.<sup>3</sup> The marriage prospects and patronage connections gained through these placements were also important to families constantly seeking to augment their

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, 'Sisterhood', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 21-50.

<sup>2</sup> Cressy, pp. 38-69; Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients*.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Robertson, 'Negotiating Favour: the Letters of Lady Raleigh', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 99-113.



wealth and status.<sup>4</sup> Women were often partially or solely responsible for arranging the marriages of their younger female kin, a matter which could affect their family's future political position.<sup>5</sup> Barbara Hanawalt's analysis of Honor Lisle's connections has further highlighted how women, and not men, were considered chiefly responsible for securing placements for female relatives at court; this was of considerable political importance, because these women were then ideally placed to sue to the King or Queen on behalf of family members.<sup>6</sup> Analysis of the Howard women's female relationships therefore reveals an entirely new aspect of this dynasty; besides furthering our understanding of the political impact and significance of these women as individuals, collective study alters the existing picture of the dynasty and allows us to look at the political narrative of Henry VIII's reign from a uniquely female perspective.

During marriage, female kinship networks remained equally vital. Women relied on their female kin for practical support and friendly advice, and Harris has stated that these networks 'preserved and strengthened' the bond between women's natal and marital families, thus 'expanding the networks and regional power of both'.<sup>7</sup> Older women gave younger relatives legal advice, or even handled such matters for them; Franklin-Harkrider has noted that Katherine Willoughby's mother Maria de Salinas used her court connections to secure her daughter's inheritance in the 1530s.<sup>8</sup> The study of female kinship networks therefore provides a new angle on patriarchal authority within aristocratic

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<sup>4</sup> Harris, 'Sisterhood', p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>6</sup> Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in *Women and Power*, ed. by Erler and Kowaleski, pp. 188-212.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, 'Sisterhood', p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Harkrider, pp. 1-2.

families. The many practical applications of these connections means that they are worthy of further exploration for the Howard women.

What, then, was the nature of the relationships between our five women, and beyond them into their wider networks of female kinship? Most studies emphasise a general warmth between female kin, noting particularly the close relationships between early modern mothers and daughters, and between sisters.<sup>9</sup> Was this the case for the Howards, or were there instances of negative relationships between them? What effect did these have, if any, on the family's position at court or in the locality? Further to this, how were these kinship relationships used and expressed by the Howard women? This chapter will follow current scholarship in considering their use of such kinship-based forms of patronage as godparenting and fostering, and ask how these affected familial ties.<sup>10</sup> Did the female kinship networks of the Howard women help the family to achieve its aims?

Let us begin with the highest-ranking woman of this study, Agnes Tylney-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk. Agnes' natal family, the Tylneys, were Lincolnshire gentry.<sup>11</sup> Agnes' marriage was the second between the Tylneys and the Howards; Thomas I's first wife had been Agnes' first cousin Elizabeth Tylney. The fact that Agnes married upwards is important in understanding her kinship obligations. The Tylneys' star was attached to that of the Howards, and the Tylneys undoubtedly intended Agnes to help continue the upward trend in their fortunes.

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<sup>9</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 117, 138, 185-8; Klein, 'Lady Anne Clifford as Mother and Matriarch', pp. 18-38. Work on female friendship has also touched upon this: see Merton, 'Women, Friendship, and Memory', in *Tudor Queenship*, ed. by Hunt and Whitelock, pp. 239-50.

<sup>10</sup> See Merton, 'Women, Friendship, and Memory'; Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship*; Tracy Adams, 'Fostering Girls in Early Modern France', in *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900* ed. by Susan Broomhall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 103-118.

<sup>11</sup> Bristow, p. 31.

Agnes had a number of female Howard relations waiting for her upon her marriage to Thomas I. Her mother-in-law, Catherine de Moleyns, was no longer alive – perhaps fortunately, as relationships between mothers and daughters-in-law could be particularly fraught.<sup>12</sup> She did, however, gain at least three sisters-in-law and two stepdaughters as well as numerous extended relations. Women's relations to stepchildren had the potential to be difficult, since the presence of a stepmother often complicated matters of inheritance.<sup>13</sup> Agnes' eldest stepson Thomas, later 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, was older than she was by about four years. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Agnes' relationship to her stepchildren was anything other than cordial. We know that in 1503 when Agnes and her husband, then Earl of Surrey, escorted Henry VII's daughter Princess Margaret to Scotland to marry King James IV, Agnes' youngest stepdaughter Muriel accompanied them.<sup>14</sup> At some point during the visit, Agnes and 'hir dochtir' Muriel shaved the King's beard apparently as a prank, because Princess Margaret had said she did not like it; the King paid them in cloth of gold.<sup>15</sup> This might suggest that they had a positive relationship, and it also suggests that Agnes fulfilled a key role in introducing her younger female kin to court life.

The position of Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, the other Duchess of Norfolk, was very different. She was roughly twenty years younger than Agnes, born c. 1497, the year that Agnes had married Thomas Howard I. She married Agnes' stepson Lord Thomas Howard, later 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, when she was fifteen and he thirty-nine in 1512. Agnes was around thirty-five at this time. Agnes was

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<sup>12</sup> Wall, 'Deference and Defiance', in *Women's Letters and Letter-Writing*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 77-93.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 192-3.

<sup>14</sup> Leland, *Colletanea*, IV, pp. 265-300.

<sup>15</sup> *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland A.D. 1500-1504*, ed. by Sir James Balfour Paul, 13 vols (Edinburgh, General Register Office, 1900), II, p. 314.

therefore Elizabeth's stepmother-in-law. Their natal statuses, however, had been very different; while Agnes had married upwards, Elizabeth had married downwards. At the time of her marriage in 1512 her father Edward Stafford was Duke of Buckingham, England's wealthiest peer, whereas her husband was merely Lord Thomas Howard. We saw in Chapter 3 that she remained conscious of the original difference in status between herself and her husband for the rest of her life, even after he had become Duke of Norfolk in 1524. She may also have married reluctantly, since she was already betrothed to her father's ward Ralph Neville, the future Earl of Westmorland, and later wrote that 'he & I had loved to gether ij yers' before the betrothal was broken in Howard's favour.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most important relationships Elizabeth would have had to negotiate after marrying was with Agnes, her stepmother-in-law. Alison Wall has shown that women's relations with their mothers-in-law could be difficult.<sup>17</sup> Among the aristocracy, this was compounded by the fact that it was possible for several women to share the same title, and therefore the same duties and responsibilities, at the same time. When a nobleman died, his title passed to his son. If he left a widow, she kept her courtesy title as dowager, but his successor's wife also gained it, creating a situation where two women possessed a title concurrently. If several male holders died within a short space of time and each left a widow, there could be many women all using the same title.<sup>18</sup> Agnes and Elizabeth both held the title of Duchess of Norfolk between 1524 and 1545.

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<sup>16</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 390-390v.

<sup>17</sup> Alison Wall, 'Deference and Defiance in Women's Letters of the Thynne Family: the Rhetoric of Relationships', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 77-93.

<sup>18</sup> This happened to the de Vere Earls of Oxford during the early sixteenth-century; in 1526 there were three Countesses of Oxford, two dowagers (Elizabeth Scrope and Anne Howard) and one 'current' (Elizabeth Trussell).

Prior to 1524, when Agnes held the title of Duchess of Norfolk and Elizabeth was the more junior Countess of Surrey, their relationship appears to have been unproblematic. This is understandable. Whilst Elizabeth was so clearly junior in rank there was no argument to be had on this point. Furthermore, during these early years Elizabeth appears to have been happy in her marriage and therefore happy within the Howard family.<sup>19</sup> The evidence suggests neutrality, rather than friendship, and while this may be due to the poor survival of personal letters, it may also relate to their physical locations during this period. It was common for daughters-in-law to live with their husband's parents during the early years of marriage, which often allowed them to form close, supportive relationships with their mothers-in-law.<sup>20</sup> This was not the case here; Elizabeth's husband had lived in his own household for a number of years, which meant there was no need for Elizabeth to live under Agnes' roof. This distance perhaps prevented the development of a friendship.

There is, however, significant evidence to show that this neutrality changed for the worse after Agnes' widowhood. In 1528, Agnes wrote a letter to Thomas Wolsey regarding the sweat, which had broken out in London and across the southeast that summer. In it she reported that her stepson the Duke of Norfolk had contracted the disease and that several in his house had died; she said this was 'as I thinke through defaulte of keping.'<sup>21</sup> The snide overtone seems clear and it has been plausibly suggested by Catharine Davies that this was an unsubtle dig at Elizabeth, who, as the duke's wife, was nominally responsible for housekeeping, including preventative medicine. Indeed, Agnes' own letter included her personal recipe for prevention and cure of the sweat and we know

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 192-3.

<sup>21</sup> TNA SP1/50, fol. 83.

that most noblewomen were expected to exercise basic herbal knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, there is no evidence that Elizabeth was at court during the summer of 1528, implying that she was at home in Kenninghall, managing the household.

This criticism carries the same connotations and the same impact that it would today, but in a sixteenth-century context it had further-reaching implications. To criticise a woman's household management was to query her fitness for the role of nobleman's wife, which in aristocratic families was a public, political role. In this case, therefore, Agnes was implicitly suggesting that Elizabeth was not fit to be Duchess of Norfolk or to undertake the public responsibilities of the title.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, this was not a private comment, but sent in a letter to the King's chief advisor, Cardinal Wolsey. As an experienced courtier Agnes' word on such matters would carry weight, and might seriously damage Elizabeth's career at court, harming the whole family.

There is evidence of a further spat over precedence at court during this period, though it is not clear precisely when this occurred. The argument was reported by Chapuys in December 1529, but the report makes clear that it had happened some time earlier.<sup>24</sup> On a court occasion, perhaps a procession, Elizabeth, the junior Duchess, had tried to place herself ahead of Agnes, the dowager Duchess. Chapuys stated that the Queen had forbidden this, weighing in on Agnes' side, and Elizabeth and her husband had taken exception, exchanging 'angry words' with the Queen and being much offended by her refusal.<sup>25</sup> This

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<sup>22</sup> Davies, 'Agnes Howard [née Tilney], duchess of Norfolk', *ODNB* [accessed 22 December 2012]. Honor Lisle shared her recipe for gallstones with Agnes' stepson Lord Edmund Howard, controller of Calais, in the 1530s; he complained that it made him wet the bed. *Lisle Letters*, II, 399.

<sup>23</sup> Just as Anne, Countess of Oxford, had done for her husband John, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, 1523-4; see Chapter 5.

<sup>24</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 232.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

was no quiet epistolary remark, but a public skirmish and relatively unusual within the Henrician court. A similar quarrel allegedly broke out between sisters-in-law Katherine Parr, the dowager Queen and wife of Lord Thomas Seymour, and Anne Seymour, Duchess of Somerset, wife of the Protector Edward Seymour, in the late 1540s. Susan James states that the Duchess of Somerset insisted that as the Protector's wife, she took precedence over the dowager Queen at all court functions.<sup>26</sup> She clearly thought that the Queen's marriage to Lord Thomas Seymour meant that she now ranked not as dowager Queen, but merely Lady Seymour. Anne may also have felt that as she had married the older of the two Seymour brothers, she ought to take precedence. This highlights the complications of rank, since it does not appear to have been clear whether a dowager Queen or the current regent's wife ought to take precedence. However, it ought to have been manifestly clear to both Elizabeth and her husband that Agnes, as dowager Duchess of Norfolk, took precedence over Elizabeth, the junior Duchess: all official lists including both dowager and current title-holders give precedence to the dowager as the more senior rank.<sup>27</sup>

This might suggest that Elizabeth was picking a fight with her mother-in-law for the sake of it. However, Chapuys' report implies that the dispute was not only over precedence concerning the title of Duchess of Norfolk. He commented that both Norfolk and Elizabeth were deeply offended by the Queen's refusal, but 'especially the Duchess, who belongs to the house of Lancaster'.<sup>28</sup> This was a reference to Elizabeth's natal birthright as a Stafford daughter of the Duke of Buckingham, and it suggests that Elizabeth felt that her pre-marital rank –

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<sup>26</sup> S. E. James, *Catherine Parr: Henry VIII's Last Love* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp. 272-3.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, New Year gift lists; see TNA E101/420/4 (1528) and TNA E101/420/15 (1532).

<sup>28</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 232.

undoubtedly higher than Agnes', a member of the gentry – remained relevant even after marriage. Elizabeth evidently struggled with the idea that she was now subordinate to somebody whose original status was considerably beneath her own. There are echoes of this in the dispute between Katherine Parr and Anne Seymour; Anne had previously been Katherine's lady-in-waiting, but before marrying the King, Katherine had been only 'Mistress Latimer'. While Katherine resented having to compete with her former servant, Anne despised Katherine because Katherine's original status was so far below her own.<sup>29</sup> The same resentment was felt by Princess Mary when in 1533 she was ordered to wait on her newborn sister Elizabeth, whom she considered illegitimate.<sup>30</sup> It is clear that rank was a difficult issue for women to negotiate.

It is interesting that these disputes only arose once both Agnes and Elizabeth shared the same title, and were thus more equal in terms of rank. Wall has shown that Maria Thynne's attitude to her mother-in-law Joan altered almost beyond recognition once Joan was widowed and Maria became mistress of the family home of Longleat; now that she was equal in rank to her mother-in-law she felt able to express her true feelings.<sup>31</sup> The same appears to be true for Elizabeth and Agnes. The public expression of an ordinarily private relationship had created a female-centric rift within the Howard dynasty, and the precedence dispute in particular shows that this had a considerable impact on the whole family's position and fortunes. Chapuys' report states that he desired to find a way to bring the Duke of Norfolk onto his and the Queen's side regarding the royal divorce, and thought that if he could arrange a match between Norfolk's

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<sup>29</sup> James, p. 273.

<sup>30</sup> Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 56-9.

<sup>31</sup> Wall, 'Deference and Defiance,' in *Women's Letters and Letter-Writing*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 77-93.



son Henry and the Princess Mary, this might be achieved.<sup>32</sup> However, he noted that it would be difficult, because the Queen had never forgiven Norfolk and his wife for the angry words they exchanged over this earlier precedence dispute, and this meant she was unlikely to agree to a match for her daughter with Norfolk's son. Thus Elizabeth and Agnes' quarrel may have cost the Howards a royal marriage. Female kinship relations could evidently have an enormous impact on a family's fortunes.

Elizabeth's relationships to her other female kin, both Staffords and Howards, also appears cool throughout much of her life. Unusually, the surviving evidence suggests that she did not have a particularly close relationship to her immediate natal family – her mother, the Duchess of Buckingham, or her two sisters, Catherine and Mary – even before the breakdown of her marriage in the early 1530s.<sup>33</sup> This is not due to a lack of archival material, for though there are no surviving letters, there are three household books for Elizabeth's establishment during the 1520s, all of which include daily lists of visitors.<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth did not receive visits from any members of the Stafford family during the 1520s. Nor were the women in evidence during her marital breakdown in the 1530s save to join the Stafford men in remonstrating with her. In a letter of 1536 she mentions her 'Aunt Hastings' - Anne Stafford-Herbert-Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, her father's sister - but only to relate how this aunt had written to her demanding that she return to her husband, hardly an act of female solidarity.<sup>35</sup> It was usual for women to lean on their female relatives, particularly

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<sup>32</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 232.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>34</sup> NRO NRS 2378, 11 D4 (1519-20); Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 49 (1523-4), Pembroke College, Cambridge, MS 300 (1526-7).

<sup>35</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

their mothers, for advice on such things, as Lady Anne Clifford did during the 1560s.<sup>36</sup> However, there is no evidence that Elizabeth did so.

Elizabeth's Howard female kin were no better as a source of support. As we have seen, her relationship with the Howard matriarch Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, was far from positive, and there is no evidence for friendships between Elizabeth and any of her sisters-in-law. Her relationship with her daughter Mary also suffered. The two were at court together during the early 1530s, but following Elizabeth's banishment to Redbourne in Hertfordshire Mary appears to have severed contact. Elizabeth wrote in 1536 that she was 'bourne in an unhappy hower to be matched with such a ungracious husband and so ungracious a sonne and a doughter'.<sup>37</sup> It has been pointed out by Beverley Murphy that this was probably not Mary's fault or, indeed, her choice; widowed in 1536 she became financially dependent upon her father and could not afford to abandon him in favour of her mother.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless there is no evidence that they ever rekindled a close relationship even after Norfolk's imprisonment and death. Elizabeth, therefore, does not appear to have had a close female kinship network of either natal or marital relations during the 1520s and 30s, and as Harris has shown, this was not usual for noblewomen.<sup>39</sup>

It is true that Elizabeth's behaviour during this period was similarly unusual, and her refusal to countenance her husband's adultery probably played a large part in her female kin's withdrawal of their support. Indeed, once Elizabeth's separation from her husband had been effected and Elizabeth's own status became more resolved, her relationships with her female kin appear to

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<sup>36</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>37</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>38</sup> Beverley A. Murphy, *Bastard Prince: Henry VIII's Lost Son* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), p. 224.

<sup>39</sup> Harris, 'Sisterhood', p. 43.

have improved. This was particularly noticeable after 1547 when her husband was imprisoned and she was free to visit kin. Her letters from the 1540s show that she fostered her nieces Susan and Dorothy Stafford during this period, and that she renewed good relations with her Aunt Hastings, asking to be recommended to her in 1540.<sup>40</sup> She also sent gifts to her sister Catherine, Countess of Westmorland, and her niece Dorothy Neville.<sup>41</sup> Her will, written in 1559, is the biggest testament to her reconciliation with her female kin both natal and marital.<sup>42</sup> First in the list of female relatives was her ‘suster Stafford’, meaning Ursula Pole-Stafford, her brother Henry’s wife. She was followed by ‘my lady Dacres and her ij daughters’, who were Elizabeth’s niece and great-nieces, and then by two of her Howard kin, the current Duchess of Norfolk (Margaret Audley-Howard) and Lady Margaret Howard, her granddaughter.<sup>43</sup> These beneficiaries reveal that once her husband Norfolk had died in 1554, Elizabeth was able to reconcile with the Howards as well as the Staffords. As Harris has shown, it was not usual for women to recognise female kin any more distant than sister-in-law in their wills, yet Elizabeth left bequests to two great-nieces, and a granddaughter-in-law.<sup>44</sup> She did not have to do this, as she did have closer female kin still living; yet she left nothing to her Neville nieces, nor, indeed, to her brother’s children, her Stafford nieces, despite the fact that she had fostered Dorothy Stafford throughout her adolescence. Elizabeth’s relationship to her female kin therefore appears unusual and certainly in the case of her

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<sup>40</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 162; TNA SP1/158, fol. 201.

<sup>41</sup> TNA SP1/158, fol. 201.

<sup>42</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285. See Appendices A and D.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Lady Dacre’ was one of the daughters of Elizabeth’s sister Mary Stafford-Neville, Lady Bergavenny.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 185-91.

bequests, affected the Howards materially as the bulk of her possessions went not to Howards, but to her natal kin, the Staffords.<sup>45</sup>

The female kinship networks of the rest of the women of this study appear far warmer. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, appears to have had a close relationship with her daughters Anne, Countess of Oxford, and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater. It is clear that Agnes and Anne, her eldest daughter, corresponded regularly. In 1534 Anne wrote to Cromwell saying that she was sorry the illegal hunters in her park had disappeared, ‘specly be cause I [told] my mother that ye wold a caussyd them be payne to a [confessed] the matter as my lord chanseler dosse ffor her’.<sup>46</sup> This letter was written following a visit that Anne had made to London, and her phrasing suggests that she had stayed with her mother, who owned the main Howard London residence of Norfolk House in Lambeth. This shows that they engaged in friendly competition over whose patron was the most effective, with Anne holding out for Cromwell, while Agnes relied on Thomas Audley, the Lord Chancellor.

Agnes bolstered this friendship with more practical support while Anne was married in the 1520s. In 1525, the ill-health of Anne’s husband John, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, caused the Howards to inveigle him into signing an indenture granting Anne more of his estate in jointure, for her to enjoy after his death.<sup>47</sup> Steven Gunn’s explanation of this tacitly assumes that Anne’s brother Thomas, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, was the driving force behind this act, probably because his is the principal male name on the indenture.<sup>48</sup> However, Agnes was also a signatory and her name is listed first, before Norfolk’s, indicating that she was

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix G.

<sup>46</sup> TNA SP1/88, fol. 83.

<sup>47</sup> TNA C54/394, m. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 84-5.

the chief representative on the Howard side. This order is preserved throughout the indenture and Agnes' brother Sir Philip Tylney is among the feoffees listed.<sup>49</sup> It seems clear that Agnes' role in this has been overlooked, and that she, as much as Norfolk, was trying to secure her daughter's future, a typical sign of practical motherly support. Franklin-Harkrider states that Maria Salinas, Lady Willoughby, used her court contacts to attempt to secure her daughter Katherine's inheritance in the early 1530s, and Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, similarly fought for her daughter Anne's rights during the 1600s.<sup>50</sup> Such assistance carries a clear political import, since Agnes' actions on behalf of her daughter effectively augmented the lands, and thus the regional influence, of the Howard dynasty at the expense of the earldom of Oxford.

Agnes acted similarly in arranging the marriage for her youngest daughter Dorothy in 1530. In 1530 the Duke of Norfolk had managed to secure the wardship of young Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby, and had married him to his eldest daughter Catherine.<sup>51</sup> However, he was brought up short by Catherine's death on 15 March 1530 from plague.<sup>52</sup> After a mourning period of absence from court, Norfolk returned to pursue the union once more, unwilling to let the match slip through his fingers. By October 1530 he had solved the dilemma by asking for a dispensation for 'one of his sisters' to marry the earl.<sup>53</sup> This proved to be

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<sup>49</sup> TNA C54/394, m. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Harkrider, pp. 1-2; Richard T. Spence, 'Margaret Clifford [née Russell] Countess of Cumberland (1560-1616), *noblewoman*', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013].

<sup>51</sup> Though it is often assumed that Derby's wives Catherine and Dorothy Howard were one and the same, it is clear from the surviving evidence that they were two separate Howard women; in December 1529 Chapuys reported that Derby had been married to a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk at the King's command, and in February 1530 Norfolk was pardoned for the 'abduction' of Derby, probably a smokescreen to prevent accusations of marital interference on the part of the King: see E. Zevin, 'A new wife for Edward, 3<sup>rd</sup> earl of Derby', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 134 (1985 for 1984), 1-16; TNA WARD 9/149/28; *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360); TNA C66/655, m. 23.

<sup>52</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV, 270 (p. 477).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, IV (i), 460 (p. 762).

Dorothy, Agnes' youngest daughter, Norfolk's youngest half-sister, and the couple were married by January 1531.<sup>54</sup> However, Norfolk's influence here is doubtful. Chapuys thought that if he had not been reminded of Dorothy's existence, he would have broken his second daughter Mary's engagement and married her to Derby.<sup>55</sup> The 1531 Act of Parliament which ensured Dorothy's jointure stated that the financial arrangements had been made by her mother Agnes, not her half-brother Norfolk.<sup>56</sup> In light of this it is highly likely that Agnes reminded Norfolk that he had an available, unmarried sister and undertook the arrangements herself. Once again we see Agnes promoting one of her daughters and successfully securing her future. In this case, female networking allowed the Howards to save Mary's engagement to the heir to the earldom of Oxford, and had secured the Howards the wealth and status of 'the highest and most powerful lord of his [the King's] dominions', as described by Chapuys.<sup>57</sup>

Agnes had an even closer relationship with her second daughter Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, especially during the late 1530s and 40s. Katherine's only daughter was named Agnes, presumably for her mother, suggesting that Agnes was also her godmother; the implications of godmothering for female kinship networks will be discussed in greater detail later on. Evidence presented during the fall of Henry VIII's fifth Queen, Catherine Howard, who grew up in Agnes' household, shows that although Katherine had her own house in Southwark during the late 1530s, she spent a great deal of time with her mother in Lambeth.<sup>58</sup> Their friendship endured through imprisonment and attainder and was documented clearly in Agnes' will of 1542, where she

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<sup>54</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 357-61.

<sup>55</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 460 (p. 762).

<sup>56</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 357-61.

<sup>57</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360).

<sup>58</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 280; TNA SP1/168 fols. 76-77 and 159v.

bequeathed ‘the fourthe parte of all my gooddes both householde stuffe Juells and plate and of all other stuffe whatsoever it be / And also the fourthe parte of all my raiment’ to ‘my lady Brigewater my doughter’.<sup>59</sup>

Katherine was the only member of Agnes’ female kin to receive a bequest in her will, despite the fact that her eldest daughter Anne, dowager Countess of Oxford, was still alive. As Appendix G shows, Agnes’ will was made in March 1542 while she was still imprisoned in the Tower for her role in Queen Catherine Howard’s fall. These circumstances provide the key to her bequests. Though Agnes was pardoned two months later in May 1542 it is clear that she did not know this was going to happen, and feared she might die in the Tower.<sup>60</sup> Of her two surviving daughters, Anne and Katherine, Katherine undoubtedly had greatest need of material aid, for she had been attainted for her role in the Queen’s fall, and had lost her material possessions, while Anne remained safe and wealthy in Cambridgeshire.<sup>61</sup> It is interesting, however, that Agnes did not alter these bequests after her release, as she survived until 1545. This does suggest that the relationship between Katherine and Agnes was particularly close, perhaps made closer by their recent imprisonment. As we saw with Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, the nature of women’s female kinship networks clearly affected the way that they bestowed their material wealth at the end of their lives.

The close relationship that Katherine evidently enjoyed with her mother Agnes extended into the next generation, for Katherine herself had close ties to her own daughter, also named Agnes. During the late 1540s and early 1550s both lived in Lambeth, and Katherine’s will of 1554 made Agnes her sole executrix as

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<sup>59</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596; see Appendix G.

<sup>60</sup> *LP* XVII, 296.

<sup>61</sup> For further discussion of this, see Chapter 6.

well as bequeathing her many movable goods.<sup>62</sup> She also remembered her granddaughter, Agnes' illegitimate daughter Mary, bequeathing her several small, but very personal items: '...gilt spoyne of silu' / angell of noble of gold / a stone called Jacent & nother stone called Amediste set in golde / silu' salt gilt wt cou' & all other small thinges beinge in my coffers in Lambeth'. Further, she left Mary a portion for her dowry entrusted until the age of sixteen.<sup>63</sup> Given Mary's illegitimacy – her mother Agnes was the mistress, and not the wife, of her father William, Lord Stourton – this was a wise financial precaution, as Mary would not receive any dowry from her father's kin.<sup>64</sup> Katherine's testamentary remembrance of her illegitimate granddaughter also shows that what mattered to her was not patrilineal descent, but their relationship through the female line. This perpetuation of close mother-daughter relationships was not unusual; as Klein's study of Anne Clifford has shown, women who had been close to their own mothers were then likely to create a similar relationship with their daughters, and thus female kinship ties remained strong throughout generations of women of the same matrilineal descent.<sup>65</sup> This was as advantageous for the entire family as it was for the women themselves; as we have seen, mothers who were close to their daughters worked hard to secure them the best marriages, inheritances, and court positions, which in turn benefited the patrilineal interests of the family.

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<sup>62</sup> John Tanswell, *The History and Antiquities of Lambeth* (London: Frederick Pickton, 1858), Appendix V, Subsidy of 1548 (pp. 229-230); Allen, p. 439; TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>63</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>64</sup> Stourton was married to Elizabeth Dudley, sister of John, later Duke of Northumberland, c. 1516.

<sup>65</sup> Klein, 'Lady Anne Clifford as Mother and Matriarch', p.21.



Sisters Anne and Katherine also maintained a friendly relationship, again representative of early modern noblewomen.<sup>66</sup> Daybell has shown how women actively maintained close relationships with their sisters through correspondence, and Harris states that women often advanced their younger sisters in matters of marriage or preferment.<sup>67</sup> In 1542 letters were sent to Anne from the Privy Council to order her to take temporary custody of Katherine's daughter Agnes, as Katherine had just been attainted and imprisoned.<sup>68</sup> That Katherine's two sons were sent not to kin, but to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Durham, suggests that it was not necessarily the policy of the Council to farm children out to their kin, and this might suggest either that Katherine had nominated her sister, or that Anne had herself come forward. In either case it denotes a friendly relationship. Anne and Katherine, however, also had two younger sisters, Elizabeth, Countess of Sussex, and Dorothy, Countess of Derby. Unfortunately there is no evidence for the nature of Anne and Katherine's relationship to these sisters, since both died young and left little archival trace. It is possible that Katherine stayed with Dorothy in Derbyshire in 1536, when she allegedly journeyed north to provide the rebels of the Pilgrimage of Grace with troops and plate, but there is no evidence to prove this.<sup>69</sup> The activities of their children, however, suggest that there may have been a link maintained between Katherine and Dorothy. During the 1540s, Katherine's daughter Agnes became the mistress of William, Lord Stourton, and in 1549, Dorothy's daughter Anne married Stourton's son by his wife Elizabeth Dudley. This could of course be coincidence, but if so it remains an interesting coincidence.

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<sup>66</sup> On sibling relations, see Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families* (London: Longman, 2004), pp. 211-25.

<sup>67</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 197-8; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 187-8.

<sup>68</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p.283.

<sup>69</sup> TNA SP1/112, fol. 34.

Similarly there appear to have been relationships of some kind between Howard half-sisters and sisters-in-law; Katherine was chief mourner at the funeral of her half-sister Elizabeth Howard-Boleyn, Countess of Wiltshire, in 1538, and Anne's chief mourner in 1559 was her sister-in-law Margaret Gamage-Howard, Lady Howard of Effingham.<sup>70</sup> We also saw earlier that Elizabeth left much apparel to her 'suster Stafford' by whom she meant her sister-in-law Ursula Pole-Stafford.<sup>71</sup> This, again, is common among aristocratic women of this period, who did not readily distinguish between half siblings and in-laws.<sup>72</sup>

The Howard women's female kinship networks were not solely comprised of immediate family, something seen clearly through Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk. The documentation regarding the fall of Catherine Howard in 1541-2 provides a snapshot into Agnes' household because it was there that Catherine conducted her pre-marital affairs. This allows us to map Agnes' female kinship networks during this period. It is clear that she was as involved with her natal relations the Tylneys as with the Howards. Her niece Katherine Tylney was among the maids within her household, and was then employed at court alongside her granddaughter Catherine Howard.<sup>73</sup> A niece-by-marriage, Malyn Chambers-Tylney, also came to Agnes for sustenance at this time following the death of her husband Philip, Agnes' nephew.<sup>74</sup> Though Agnes was chiefly concerned to wring information from Malyn regarding the Catherine Howard case, she did promise to 'do for her as she myght', underlining the continued loyalty she felt towards natal female kin even forty years after her marriage.<sup>75</sup> It

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<sup>70</sup> TNA SP3/12, fol. 42; *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>71</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285.

<sup>72</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 188.

<sup>73</sup> TNA SP1/167, fol. 119v.

<sup>74</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 145.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 145.

also highlights her value to them; she continued to fulfil her obligations even in the midst of accusations of treason.

These extended networks of kin were not only important for Agnes, but for the rest of the Howard women as well. There is evidence to show that both Anne and Katherine, Agnes' daughters, kept up links to their mother's relations, the Tylneys and although this evidence is not centred on female kin, it is nevertheless a useful insight into these women's understanding of matrilineal kinship networks. Anne, like her mother, employed Tylney relations within her household. Clearly they were trusted retainers, for in 1523 she sent 'my cosyn Tylney my servant' to Wolsey, bearing not only a letter but additional verbal communications.<sup>76</sup> When her husband's successor the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford broke into her house at Castle Camps in 1526, Anne wrote a complaint to Wolsey dated from 'Wyttysforth': this was almost certainly Whittlesford in Cambridgeshire, a house owned by a branch of the Tylney family.<sup>77</sup> The fact that she had gone to her mother's kin for safety reveals the continued importance of these ties. Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, also valued her Tylney kin, leaving jewellery in her will to 'Emorye tylney my kinesmane', who also witnessed her testament.<sup>78</sup> Emery Tylney was a second cousin of Katherine's, a grandson of Agnes' brother Sir Philip Tylney.<sup>79</sup> The endurance of these ties down the line of female descent within the Howard family underlines the strong sense of kinship possessed by these women. These links were important for the Tylneys as they gained materially in matters of preferment and bequests. The continuation of the family relationship also cemented existing ties of service between the two

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<sup>76</sup> TNA SP1/27, fol. 152.

<sup>77</sup> In the 1520s it was held by Robert Tylney, a first cousin of Agnes'. See Bristow, pp. 29-30.

<sup>78</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>79</sup> See Appendix C.

families, for the Tylneys had served the Howards since Henry VII's time. This became important in matters of local government and in estate management; Tylney men often functioned as feoffees to their Howard kinsmen.<sup>80</sup>

Of our five women, Mary, Duchess of Richmond, has had little attention in this chapter thus far. This is because, as we have seen, Mary was not close to her mother; her sole sister died young in 1530 without leaving any evidence of their relationship; and there is likewise no evidence that Mary had a close relationship to any of the other Howard women of this study. Though Mary lived alongside her sister-in-law Frances de Vere-Howard, Countess of Surrey, at Kenninghall during the 1530s, nothing has survived to document their relationship.<sup>81</sup> During the early 1530s Mary was at court as lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn, but again there is nothing to suggest that they were particularly friendly. Mary fostered her nieces and nephews, her brother Henry's children, during the 1540s but she does not seem to have had an especially friendly relationship to her nieces either during or after this period. Of course, we are hampered by the fact that Mary does not appear to have made a will, or at least none has survived. This would naturally have given us far greater insight into Mary's understanding of her kinship network.

Nevertheless, what Mary's, and to a certain extent Elizabeth's, female networks emphasise is not the importance of kin but of friends. Mary's time at court had given her two notably close friendships, to the King's niece Lady Margaret Douglas, and to a distant relation Mary Shelton. The three were of similar ages, and had probably grown up together at court. Along with Mary's brother Henry and others, the three were responsible for the production of the

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<sup>80</sup> For instance, Sir Philip Tylney, Agnes' brother, was a feoffee for the estates granted to Anne, Countess of Oxford, in 1525; TNA C54/394, m. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Head, p. 249.

Devonshire Manuscript, a miscellany including extracts of Chaucer, copies of poems written by Wyatt or Surrey, and original compositions, compiled during the 1530s and 40s.<sup>82</sup> Helen Baron has identified Mary's hand on only one occasion within the manuscript, showing that she copied her brother's poem 'O happy dames'.<sup>83</sup> This poem describes the grief of a wife at the departure of her husband for foreign climes. Baron has suggested that Mary transcribed it 'as a gesture of celebration, commiseration, and valediction' to her friend Margaret Douglas, who was due to leave court when her husband was sent to Scotland on campaign.<sup>84</sup> Further evidence of their close friendship is found in the way that Mary aided and abetted Margaret in her secret marriage to Lord Thomas Howard, Mary's half-uncle, in 1536.<sup>85</sup> Several years later, in 1541, Margaret embarked on an affair with another Howard man, Queen Catherine Howard's brother Charles, for which she was placed under house arrest in Sion Abbey. When the Queen's adulteries were discovered, it was decided to imprison her in the Abbey instead, and Margaret was ordered to go with her friend Mary to Kenninghall in Norfolk.<sup>86</sup> Their friendship endured after Margaret married the Earl of Lennox and departed for the north in 1545. In 1544 at the time of her marriage, Henry VIII had given Margaret Stepney Palace, which was where her first son was born.<sup>87</sup> In 1549, Mary, deprived of her home at Kenninghall due to the imprisonment of her father, addressed two letters to Sir Thomas Smith 'from stepney'.<sup>88</sup> The Howards did not own any property in this area of London and it

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<sup>82</sup> BL Add. MS 17492.

<sup>83</sup> Baron, pp. 318-335. See also Heale, pp. 296-313.

<sup>84</sup> Baron, p. 329.

<sup>85</sup> TNA E36/120/65; see Chapter 6.

<sup>86</sup> TNA SP1/167, fol. 123v.

<sup>87</sup> Rosalind K. Marshall, 'Lady Margaret Douglas, countess of Lennox (1515-1578), *noblewoman*', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013].

<sup>88</sup> TNA SP10/7, no. 1; TNA SP10/7, no. 3.

seems plausible to argue that Margaret had offered her friend her own London home.

Scholarship is clear that friendships could be as important to women, and as useful to their families, as kinship networks.<sup>89</sup> Mary's father the Duke of Norfolk presumably considered her friendship to the King's niece as a potential source of royal patronage and an alternative route to the King. She was also close friends with Mary Shelton, whose parents were guardians of Princess Mary during the 1530s, and with the Seymour family during the late 1530s and 40s.<sup>90</sup> Mary's unusual preference for female friends over female kin may have been shared by her mother Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk. Although no close female kin visited Elizabeth in Norfolk during the 1520s, she did receive visits from a number of other noblewomen, some of whom were distant kin and some of whom were ladies-in-waiting to Catherine of Aragon. They included Ladies Parr, Bryan, Marney, and Gray, and Mistress Parker.<sup>91</sup> This may indicate a social network of neighbours, as well as revealing friendships made during Elizabeth's time at court. It is likely that this network held benefits for the rest of the family in terms of strengthening local and court networks, and providing a route for court gossip.

Thus far we have examined the nature of the relationships between our five Howard women and their female kin and friends. The evidence suggests that

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<sup>89</sup> See Gowing, 'The Politics of Women's Friendship', in *Love, Friendship and Faith*, ed. by Gowing, Hunter and Rubin, pp. 131-149; Mendelson, 'Neighbourhood as Female Community in the Life of Anne Dormer', in *Women, Identities and Communities*, ed. by Broomhall and Tarbin, pp. 153-64; Merton, 'Women, Friendship, and Memory', in *Tudor Queenship*, ed. by Hunt and Whitelock, pp. 239-50.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph S. Block, 'Shelton family (*per.* 1504-1559), *gentry*', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013]; Susan Brigden, 'Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League'', *Historical Journal* 37 (1994), 507-37 (p. 525).

<sup>91</sup> Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 49; Pembroke MS 300. We know that Ladies Parr and Bryan, and Mistress Parker, were the Queen's ladies in waiting. Mistress Parker may be Jane Parker who married George Boleyn in 1526. Lady Bryan was distant kin to the Howards. See Appendix A.

Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, and her daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, prioritised female friends over female kin, but that the other three, Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and her daughters Anne and Katherine, had very close female kinship networks. We have already considered some of the ways in which these relationships were expressed, such as through marriage, securing of inheritance, and friendly and practical patronage advice, and it is clear that all of these were immensely useful not only to the women themselves, but to the family more broadly. Some of these expressions of female kinship, however, deserve closer attention.

The practice of fostering is one such. Aristocratic children were often sent away to be brought up within a noble household of equal or greater status in order to promulgate links between the two families, provide the fosteree with useful networks for advancement, and potentially cement the alliance through inter-marriage.<sup>92</sup> Some households served as a spring-board to a place at court, which held even greater advantages for noble families. Though there has not been a great deal of investigation into the practice of fostering, Tracy Adams and Barbara Harris have identified a number of ‘norms’.<sup>93</sup> Harris has argued that women usually prioritised natal kin over marital relatives when accepting children for fostering, noting that Eleanor, Countess of Rutland, had two of her sisters to live with her after her marriage, and Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, fostered one of her daughter Ursula, Lady Stafford’s, children.<sup>94</sup> Harris also advances this theory for Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, but based on the

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<sup>92</sup> Adams, ‘Fostering Girls in Early Modern France’, in *Emotions in the Household*, ed by Broomhall, pp. 103-118.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-118; Harris, ‘Sisterhood’, pp. 25-6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

erroneous assumption that Agnes fostered her three *granddaughters*. In fact, she fostered one granddaughter and two grandsons.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, the evidence regarding Agnes' household at the time of Queen Catherine Howard's fall has led to a somewhat overstated view of her fostering. Catharine Davies and Lacey Baldwin Smith have stated that Catherine was simply one among many young female relatives brought up concurrently within Agnes' household; Smith states that 'the children of innumerable Howard relations and dependents' were brought up by Agnes, and Starkey has described her household as 'a slackly run mixed boarding school'.<sup>96</sup> Though Agnes probably was the Howards' most prolific fosterer, this was not as pronounced as has been thought. Of the women mentioned in the Catherine Howard evidence, only a few can be clearly pinpointed as relations Agnes was fostering and only one of these was from her natal relatives, the Tylneys. We know that she fostered her granddaughter Agnes ap Rhys, and Agnes' two brothers Griffith and Thomas.<sup>97</sup> She probably fostered her son William's first wife, Katherine Broughton, who became her ward in 1529.<sup>98</sup> Others such as Mary Hall, Joan Bulmer, Alice Wilkes, and Dorothy Dawby were servants who shared a sleeping chamber with the noble fosterees. It is possible that space limited the number of relations Agnes was able to foster. Nevertheless her activities in this regard proved immensely useful to her natal and marital kin, for both Katherine Tylney and Catherine Howard gained places at court paving the way for others such as

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<sup>95</sup> Nicolas, *PCP*, VII, p. 283.

<sup>96</sup> Davies, 'Agnes Howard [née Tilney], duchess of Norfolk', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013]; Smith, *Catherine Howard*, p. 42; David Starkey, *Six Wives*, p. 646.

<sup>97</sup> Nicolas, *PCP*, VII, p. 283.

<sup>98</sup> *LP* IV, 6072 (21).



Joan Bulmer, who successfully sued to Queen Catherine Howard for a place among her maids.<sup>99</sup>

Other Howard women also undertook fostering roles. During the 1530s and 40s, Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, fostered her brother's daughters Susan and Dorothy Stafford.<sup>100</sup> Dorothy later married Sir William Stafford, the widower of Mary Boleyn, a distant relation of Elizabeth's. It is possible that Elizabeth helped to secure this match. Elizabeth's household, however, may not have been the most pleasant place for young female relatives. Her letter to her brother in 1537 stated that if he wanted to send her another daughter, he should send Dorothy, 'for I am well a quyntyde w<sup>th</sup> hir condycons all redy & so I am nott w<sup>th</sup> the othe<sup>r</sup> & se ys yongyst to & yf she be Inynged therfore she ys better to breke as consarnyng hir yowth'.<sup>101</sup> The idea that girls were sent to be 'broken' is not one espoused by any other noblewoman during this period, indeed Tracy Adams underlines the positive nature of most fostering relationships.<sup>102</sup> This may help to explain Elizabeth's lack of female relationships; possibly she was considered harsh or unfeeling, or may herself have found other people difficult.

Elizabeth's daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, undertook the most wholesale form of fostering during the late 1540s and 50s. Her brother the Earl of Surrey was executed in 1547, leaving a widow and four young children. Her father, the Duke of Norfolk, was imprisoned indefinitely at the same time and the family home sequestered. Though the children were initially placed under the guardianship of Lord Wentworth, custody was granted to their aunt Mary,

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<sup>99</sup> TNA SP1/161, fol. 85.

<sup>100</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 162.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 152.

<sup>102</sup> Adams, pp. 110-14.

Duchess of Richmond, in 1548.<sup>103</sup> She raised them throughout the reign of Edward VI at considerable personal cost, and her efforts were recognised in her father's will of 1554.<sup>104</sup> Her actions in this regard were of huge importance to the Howard dynasty as Mary became wholly responsible for its continuance during this period. The eldest of the children was ten, meaning that none of them were old enough to go into court service or be fostered separately, and Mary's actions meant that they were able to grow up as a family during their most vulnerable years.

The tradition of godparenting could also function as an expression of female kinship networks, though not exclusively so.<sup>105</sup> In England, children were given three godparents; two godmothers and one godfather for a girl, the opposite for a boy.<sup>106</sup> Without specific records of christenings it is often difficult to track godparents, though the principle godparent was usually the 'naming' godparent and often gave the child their own name. As Merton points out, however, it is often difficult to trace this among women because many shared the same name in any case.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that several of the Howard women undertook this responsibility, and that Agnes was the most prolific. Besides being the only person chosen to godparent both Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, she also took on this role within her own family. Given their

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<sup>103</sup> Beverley A. Murphy, Mary Fitzroy [née Howard], Duchess of Richmond (c. 1519-1555?), *noblewoman*, *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013].

<sup>104</sup> TNA PROB 11/37/191.

<sup>105</sup> There is a considerable body of work on early modern godparenting, most notably Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship*; J. Bossy, 'Blood and baptism: kinship, community and Christianity in Western Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries', in *Sanctity and Society: the Church and the World*, ed. by D. Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 129-44; Philip Niles, 'Baptism and the Naming of Children in Late Medieval England' in *Studies on the Personal Name in Later Medieval England and Wales*, ed. by Dave Postles and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University, 2006), pp. 147-158. For the significance of godmothering as a sign of female kinship ties, see Harris, 'Sisterhood', pp. 23-4.

<sup>106</sup> Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship*, p. 175.

<sup>107</sup> Merton, 'Women, Friendship and Memory', in *Tudor Queenship*, ed. by Hunt and Whitelock, pp. 6-9.

names it seems likely that Agnes was godmother to her own granddaughter, Agnes ap Rhys, and her Tylney niece named Agnes.<sup>108</sup> This argues that godmothering was an expression of female kinship for both natal and marital relations.

Elizabeth also undertook the role of godparent. She was chosen as godmother to her great-grandson Philip, earl of Arundel, in 1557.<sup>109</sup> This reveals that she was only invited to take this role once she was reconciled with the Howard family after the death of her husband in 1554, and suggests that godparenthood was only bestowed upon those who were already valued within their families. Undoubtedly godmothering was important for the Howard family, as it gave babies useful patronage connections for the future and strengthened friendships between families. Agnes' role in godmothering royal babies therefore potentially strengthened ties between the Howards and the royal family.

Women could, however, prevent godparenthood being used to best advantage. A letter from Norfolk to the King in 1538 explained that his daughter-in-law Frances, Countess of Surrey, had just given birth prematurely to a son; he stated:

if she had gon her full rekenyng, and then had a Sone, I intended to haue ascuk to the kinges highnes to haue beseched hym to haue had it christened in his name and in likewise to your good lordshippe to haue ben an other godfather, but bycause she was so long delyuered before her rekenyng, the women her wold not suffre me to let the child be so long unchristened<sup>110</sup>

Clearly 'the women' had stood in the way of allowing the King and Cromwell to godparent this latest Howard baby, thus depriving it of the most influential godfathers it could hope to possess. However, the frailty of babies during this

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<sup>108</sup> Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship*, p. 175; Bristow, p. 31.

<sup>109</sup> J. G. Elzinga, 'Philip Howard [St Philip Howard], thirteenth earl of Arundel', *ODNB* [accessed 20 April 2012].

<sup>110</sup> TNA SP1/130, fol. 43.

age, along with the fact that this one was premature, meant that christenings happened swiftly so that the child would be spiritually safe if it should die soon after birth.<sup>111</sup>

Taken as a whole, it is evident that there were very strong relationships between our five Howard women, their female relations and their matriarchal kin. This is important when we consider their relationship to the men of the dynasty as it shows how female kinship networks, even those of immediate family, could operate outside of patriarchal interference. Even more significantly, it is clear that for the Howards, these close kinship and friendship links could damage as well as augment the family's position. The most serious instance of female networks causing trouble for the Howards was the fall of Queen Catherine Howard in the early 1540s. This episode has been discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6, but the explicit role of female kinship networks makes it instructive to consider this aspect of the Queen's fall here. It is clear from the evidence collected at the time that the women in and around Agnes' household, including her daughter Katherine, granddaughter Agnes, daughter-in-law Margaret, and various other kin and female servants, knew that Catherine Howard had been conducting an affair during her time in Horsham and Lambeth, even if they were not all aware of the specifics.<sup>112</sup> It seems equally clear that the family patriarch, the Duke of Norfolk, Catherine's uncle, did not; not only did he himself deny all knowledge, but he was never accused by any member of the household.<sup>113</sup> The Howard women had secured Catherine's placement at court

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<sup>111</sup> W. Coster, 'Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: the Churching of Women, 1500-1700', in *Women in the Church*, ed. by William J. Shiels and Diana Wood (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 377-388 (p. 382).

<sup>112</sup> Agnes denied knowledge of Catherine's pre-marital affairs, but as Chapter 6 explains, she leapt to the right conclusion on hearing of Catherine's arrest.

<sup>113</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 143.

regardless of this knowledge, and both Katherine and Lady Margaret Howard also sued to her to accept her old lover Francis Dereham as a servant.<sup>114</sup> Catherine's affairs whilst at court were also arranged and kept secret by female kin; her cousin Katherine Tylney who had been with her in Agnes' household, and Jane Boleyn, Lady Rochford.<sup>115</sup> That Norfolk was oblivious to this demonstrates the way in which female kinship networks could operate outside of patriarchal control.

This is also notable in the relationship between Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and her daughter Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater. Agnes was a model matriarch; she had borne children, she ran the family's London house in Lambeth, she arranged advantageous marriages for them, and introduced various younger members to court. She continued doing so after her widowhood in 1524, clearly demonstrating a mutual respect between herself and her marital family: they needed her wealth and experience, and she continued to prioritise their concerns. Her daughter Katherine, on the other hand, was rebellious and had actively dissented from the wishes of the Howard patriarchy on several occasions, inciting rebellion in Wales and then divorcing from the husband her family had chosen for her.<sup>116</sup> In return, she had been 'cut off' by her brother Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, the family patriarch; he did not make any move to assist her during the breakdown of her marriage in the 1530s despite her evidently unpleasant situation.<sup>117</sup> One might expect Agnes, the loyal Howard matriarch, to have followed her stepson's example for the good of the dynasty. It

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<sup>114</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 87.

<sup>115</sup> TNA SP1/167, fol. 136.

<sup>116</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>117</sup> See Chapter 4.

is clear that she did not do this, and thus that female kinship networks within the Howard dynasty operated outside of patriarchal control.

One final example of the strength of the Howard women's female kinship ties is their choice of burial place. As Harris has argued, choice of burial place was often incredibly significant for noblewomen, denoting their closest relationships and the way in which they desired to be remembered.<sup>118</sup> The burial places of our five Howard women clearly underline their commitment to their Howard identity, but this was not all – they also chose burial in a location particularly associated with female kin. This was the Norfolk chapel in St Mary's Church in Lambeth, near to Norfolk House. This chapel was nominally built by Agnes' husband Thomas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, in 1522, but was referred to throughout the surviving churchwardens accounts as 'my lady of norfolkes chapell' as late as the 1560s, which suggests that she herself had been responsible for building it.<sup>119</sup> Agnes was buried there in 1545 'in suche place whereas I haue prepared my Tombe'.<sup>120</sup> It is not clear from the phrasing in her will whether she had designed the tomb herself or not. Nevertheless it is clear that Agnes identified strongly with the Howards and actively chose to be remembered first and foremost as a member of the dynasty. Three out of her four daughters then also chose burial within their mother's chapel.<sup>121</sup> The first was Elizabeth, Countess of Sussex, in 1534.<sup>122</sup> Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater,

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<sup>118</sup> Harris, 'The Fabric of Piety', p. 327; see also Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, "'Prudentia ultra Sexum': Lady Jane Bacon and the Management of Her Families', in *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-Fashioning in Post-Reformation England*, ed. by Muriel C. McClendon, Joseph P. Ward, and Michael MacDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 100-124.

<sup>119</sup> *Survey of London*, 23, p. 105; *Lambeth Churchwardens' Accounts*, I, pp. 73-4.

<sup>120</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596.

<sup>121</sup> The fourth was Dorothy Howard-Stanley, Countess of Derby, who died sometime before 1547 and whose burial place is unknown. If she is not buried in Lambeth it is probably because she died in Derbyshire and the distance was too great to consider transportation of her corpse.

<sup>122</sup> Aubrey, V, p. 238.

chose to be buried ‘in my Ladie my mother tombe in the chapell w<sup>h</sup>in the p<sup>r</sup>yshe churche in Lambeth’, testament to their especially close relationship.<sup>123</sup> The third, Anne, Countess of Oxford, was buried at Lambeth in 1559, as noted by the contemporary London diarist Henry Machyn.<sup>124</sup> In her analysis of women’s tomb-building, Harris does not note any examples of women choosing to be buried within the tombs of other women of their family.<sup>125</sup> There is, however, one notable instance of this from the later sixteenth-century. In 1591 a monument was erected in St Leonard’s Shoreditch to the memory of four women related by blood and marriage: Catherine Stafford-Neville, Countess of Westmorland (d. 1555), Eleanor Paston-Manners, Countess of Rutland (d. 1551), Margaret Neville-Manners, Countess of Rutland (d. 1559) and Catherine Neville-Constable, Lady Constable (d. 1591).<sup>126</sup> However, this monument was erected by Lady Constable, sometime after the deaths of the other women, and it is not clear that they chose burial in this chapel for reasons of female kinship.

Surprisingly, Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, also chose burial at Lambeth, within the Howard chapel built by her rival Agnes, notably not alongside her husband, who was buried at Framlingham.<sup>127</sup> This clearly documents her reconciliation with the Howards towards the end of her life, but shows that although she chose to be remembered as a member of the Howard dynasty, she did not want to be remembered as Norfolk’s wife. It is interesting that very few of the Howard men were buried within the chapel at Lambeth,

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<sup>123</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>124</sup> *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>125</sup> Harris, ‘The Fabric of Piety’, pp. 308-35.

<sup>126</sup> See Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 59.

<sup>127</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285; Lysons, *Environs of London*, I, p. 285; Stone and Colvin, ‘The Howard Tombs at Framlingham, Suffolk’ pp. 159-71.

excepting babies or very young children.<sup>128</sup> Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Dukes of Norfolk were eventually placed in Framlingham, along with Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Howard son-in-law Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond.<sup>129</sup> Agnes' son Lord William Howard of Effingham was buried at Reigate, and Howard satellite Thomas Boleyn, Earl of Wiltshire, was buried at Hever, though his wife Elizabeth chose burial at Lambeth.<sup>130</sup> This suggests that Agnes' chapel at Lambeth was understood primarily as a memorial to the female members of the Howard dynasty, a monument to the strong networks of female kinship found within the dynasty, and moreover that the women intended posterity to view it in this way. There could be no more obvious message regarding the importance of female kinship ties within this family.<sup>131</sup>

In conclusion, then, it is clear that networks of female kinship and friendship were of paramount importance to all of the women of this study, and this exposes an aspect of the Howard dynasty hitherto overlooked. These networks performed vital functions for the women's natal and marital families, such as fostering, godmothering, the arrangement of marriages and placement of women at court, and securing inheritances. All of these served to strengthen the connections between the women's natal and marital families, and augment the Howards' political status, highlighting the significant contribution of the Howard women to the success of the Howard dynasty.

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<sup>128</sup> There are a number of male children born to Agnes and to Anne Plantagenet, 1<sup>st</sup> wife of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, buried in this chapel. See Aubrey, V, pp. 237-8.

<sup>129</sup> Marks, 'The Howard Tombs at Thetford and Framlingham: New Discoveries', pp. 252-68.

<sup>130</sup> McDermott, 'William Howard, first Baron Howard of Effingham', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013]; Hughes, 'Thomas Boleyn, Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond', *ODNB* [accessed 25 January 2013].

<sup>131</sup> Mary, Duchess of Richmond, is the only Howard woman of this study who was not buried at Lambeth; she was interred at Framlingham.



Female networks were also of importance to the lives of these women themselves. We see them giving advice, providing useful patronage connections, accommodation, and doing so even for female kin who had been excluded from the family's patriarchal networks. This demonstrates that the Howard women's networks could function outside of, and sometimes in opposition to, those of the men. Clearly the Howard women were able to resist and subvert patriarchal authority within the family, a conclusion tested further throughout the rest of this thesis. Though this subversion could often be positive in the ways outlined above, it is clear from episodes like the precedence dispute between the Duchesses of Norfolk, and the fall of Catherine Howard, that the Howards' female kinship networks could also be very damaging to the political fortunes of the entire family. This chapter therefore changes the existing picture of the Howard dynasty; the political favour, rise, and fall of the family are shown to be as dependent upon the women as the men, and this underlines the necessity for the study of female narratives in dynastic context.

### Chapter 3

#### The Duke's 'Great Matter': The Norfolks' Marriage Breakdown, c. 1526-

#### 1540

The breakdown of the marriage between Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, and her husband Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, is among the most infamous and best documented of the early sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Married for a total of forty-two years (1512-1554) the couple were acrimoniously separated for twenty-eight of these after Norfolk took a mistress, Bess Holland, around 1527, and Elizabeth openly objected to his infidelity. Placed in 'prysonment' in isolated Redbourn, Hertfordshire, by her husband in 1534, Elizabeth took up her pen and bombarded the King's chief advisor, Thomas Cromwell, with letters.<sup>2</sup> Twelve of these survive, spanning 1534 – 1540, and they are the major source for this episode.<sup>3</sup> The significance of this episode lies in the parallel with the King's 'Great Matter': the marriage between England's premier aristocratic couple broke down as though it was a reflection of the monarchs' own, and this chapter

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<sup>1</sup> Other English examples include the King's numerous marriages; Henry Percy, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland, and Mary Talbot (see Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4); William Parr, later Earl of Northampton, and Anne Bouchier (see S. E. James, 'A Tudor Divorce: The Marital History of William Parr, Marquess of Northampton', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 90 (1990), 199-204); Walter, Lord Hungerford, and his third wife Elizabeth Hussey (see BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 397); Anne, Lady Powis, and Mary, Lady Monteagle, two of the daughters of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (see Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 94-5 and 174-5); and Thomas Wyatt and Elizabeth Brooke (see Colin Burrow, 'Sir Thomas Wyatt (c. 1503-1542), poet and ambassador', *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013]).

<sup>2</sup> Redbourn thus described by Elizabeth in 1536: BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>3</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 151, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 23 August 1534; TNA SP1/91, fol. 23, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 3 March 1535; TNA SP1/106, fol. 219, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 28 September 1536; BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 30 December 1536; *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 24 October 1537; *Ibid.*, fol. 389, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 10 November 1537; *Ibid.*, fol. 152, Elizabeth to her brother Henry, Lord Stafford, December 1537; *Ibid.*, fols. 388-388v, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 26 June 1538; *Ibid.*, fol. 391, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 29 January 1539; TNA SP1/144, fol. 16, Elizabeth to Cromwell, 3 March 1539; TNA SP1/158, fol. 201, Elizabeth to Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, 11 April 1540.

argues that this was not a coincidence. Focusing on the intertwining of these two marriage breakdowns creates new perspectives on both episodes, with implications for our understanding of the Henrician political narrative.

Elizabeth's situation has received some attention from historians and literary scholars. Her marriage breakdown formed the subject of a study by Barbara Harris, who used it as a case study to examine women's attitudes to love, marriage, and the double-standard.<sup>4</sup> Historians of letter-writing, notably James Daybell, have used Elizabeth's letters as an example of persuasive petitionary style. Daybell points out that letters were an important, perhaps the major, part of Elizabeth's attempts to improve her situation, and that historians must therefore exercise caution when dealing with their factual content.<sup>5</sup> The marriage breakdown has been used by scholars engaged in biographical research of Elizabeth's husband the Duke of Norfolk, her son Henry, Earl of Surrey, and political figures related to the Howard family such as Anne Boleyn, and also by those tracing the political narrative of Henry VIII's reign. Such studies naturally discuss the separation from the point of view of these better-known figures rather than Elizabeth herself.<sup>6</sup> This chapter seeks to place Elizabeth's own experience centre-stage.

One of the only scholars to comment on the extraordinary parallel between the Duke's 'Great Matter' and the King's is William Sessions in his biography of Elizabeth's son Henry, Earl of Surrey.<sup>7</sup> Sessions highlights the close relationship between Elizabeth and Queen Catherine of Aragon, and

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<sup>4</sup> Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', pp. 371-382.

<sup>5</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 245-6.

<sup>6</sup> Brenan and Statham, *House of Howard*, I, Ch. IV, pp. 117-94; Casady, pp. 17-20; Childs, pp. 87-93; Head, pp. 251-2, 344-5; Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, p. 141; Murphy, pp. 223-4; John E. Paul, *Catherine of Aragon and Her Friends* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), pp. 128-31; Sessions, pp. 41-68; Warnicke, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Sessions, pp. 41-68.

suggests that Elizabeth's refusal to divorce her husband was linked to her support for the Queen.<sup>8</sup> However, he does not examine this parallel in any further detail, focusing instead on the impact on her son, and situating her behaviour in the context of the early modern culture of honour.<sup>9</sup> A closer examination of the similarity between the royal divorce and Elizabeth's situation will form the focus of this chapter, for the fact that the marriage between two of the King and Queen's closest respective supporters should fail at the same time as the monarchs' own is the chief reason why the Norfolks' marriage breakdown is of particular interest. I have found no other aristocratic marriage dispute which so closely mirrors the chronology of the King's. The Norfolks' marriage breakdown therefore provides an important insight into the effects of the royal divorce on aristocratic marriage, and the political impact of women's actions in these circumstances. It therefore enhances the existing picture of the Howards' involvement in the King's divorce, usually only discussed in relation to the Duke of Norfolk and to the next Queen, Anne Boleyn. It also highlights the position of the Howard and Stafford families during this period; this chapter will ask whether this separation affected their status and favour.

It must be noted that the fact that the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk suffered marital problems, and even separated, was not in itself unusual. There were other marriage disputes among aristocratic couples during this period, such as William, Lord Parr and Anne Bouchier, Henry, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland and Mary Talbot, Edward, Lord Powis and Anne Brandon, Thomas, Lord Monteagle and Mary Brandon, and, indeed some members of the Howard

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<sup>8</sup> Sessions, pp. 45, 48, 58-9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-57 and 42-5.

family.<sup>10</sup> What makes the Norfolks' situation unusual is the fact that their dispute mirrored the King's and that Elizabeth is our chief source. Though there are surviving letters on the topic of marital strife from several of the women listed above, there are not usually very many of these for any given example.<sup>11</sup> Ordinarily, our knowledge of aristocratic marital problems during this period comes from letters written by a woman's male relatives to her husband or to higher authorities on her behalf. This is because a woman's father was usually her chief source of support in such circumstances.<sup>12</sup> Where her father was not available, a brother usually took on this role as was the case for Anne Howard-de Vere, Countess of Oxford, in the late 1520s.<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth's father, Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was dead by the time her marriage broke down, as he had been executed for treason in 1521. Though she did have a brother, Henry, Lord Stafford, his two surviving letters on the subject show that he was not prepared to intercede for her.<sup>14</sup> Thus there are very few letters from Elizabeth's male relatives to mediating authorities, and this isolation, as Daybell has suggested, probably caused Elizabeth to write more letters to defend herself.<sup>15</sup>

Our reliance on Elizabeth as the chief source is also due to the selective survival of the primary evidence. Elizabeth's own letters to Cromwell, and the few written by her brother and husband to Cromwell, have survived among the State Papers and the Cotton collection.<sup>16</sup> Cromwell's replies, along with any

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Howard and John, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, and Katherine Howard and Henry, Lord Daubeney. See Chapter 5.

<sup>11</sup> The exception being Anne Howard-de Vere, Countess of Oxford; see Chapter 5.

<sup>12</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 177-9. Stretton, 'Marriage, Separation and the Common Law', in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. by Berry and Foyster, pp. 18-39.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>14</sup> TNA SP1/76, fols. 38-9.

<sup>15</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 245-6.

<sup>16</sup> See n. 3 above.

letters from Norfolk or Stafford to Elizabeth, or from Elizabeth to Norfolk, however, have been lost.<sup>17</sup> Stretton's work has shown that early modern couples with marital problems sometimes turned to secular law courts to negotiate settlements, but there are no surviving lawsuits for this case in Chancery or Requests, even taking coverture into account.<sup>18</sup> Though Norfolk appears to have proposed a formal separation, we shall see that Elizabeth refused this, which means that there is no separation suit to be found among ecclesiastical court records. Anecdotal evidence is also sparse; the Spanish ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, reported gossip of their problems during the early 1530s, but this ceased after 1533.<sup>19</sup> Thus the quirks of the evidence, alongside the lack of cooperation from her male relatives, means that we are largely reliant on Elizabeth's letters for information regarding her marriage breakdown, and must allow for the problems of bias that this brings.

Elizabeth's letters also raise other interpretative issues. It is clear from comparison of her letters that the majority were written by an amanuensis, most probably because her own writing was laboured and uncertain and her spelling erratic at best.<sup>20</sup> Where she did write in her own hand, she apologised for doing so; one section of a holograph letter to Cromwell in 1535 reads 'I ffaer me that he kan not rad my hand het hes so hel and les I pra you to sand me word in nyretime and you kan rade my hand hor not no mor to you hat tes tyme bot I pra

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<sup>17</sup> There is no collection of the Howards' early modern correspondence within the wider family archive at Arundel Castle, and though there are Stafford family papers at Staffordshire Record Office, there are no surviving letters relating to this particular episode. I am grateful to the archivists at both these locations for helping to ascertain this.

<sup>18</sup> Stretton, 'Marriage, Separation and the Common Law', in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. by Berry and Foyster, pp. 18-39; *idem.*, *Marital Litigation in the Court of Requests: 1542-1642* (Cambridge: CUP for the Royal Historical Society, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> *CSP Spain* IV (i), 509; *LP* V, 216; *LP* V, 238; *CSP Spain* IV (ii), 1130.

<sup>20</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 96-7.

god saue you hass wall to do has I wold my sallff'.<sup>21</sup> Daybell has shown how the use of an amanuensis can be problematic for interpretation, because it removes us from a woman's own words.<sup>22</sup> A secretary might have made changes, or even invented passages. His presence – secretaries were usually male – might cause her to self-censor private material. Letters by amanuenses might be written from drafts, from notes, or to dictation, but it is often difficult to tell how a letter was composed. How do we know that we are reading Elizabeth's own version of events?

The number of surviving letters is a great advantage here as it allows stylistic comparison. Elizabeth's letters appear consistent in tone and style, utilising several of the same non-stock phrases throughout, which, according to Daybell, might suggest that they were written at her dictation rather than from notes or drafts.<sup>23</sup> This in itself is thought to be a more accurate rendition of a woman's own words.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear whether she used a trained secretary, as she wrote in 1539 'I haue not connsayle [to] put my self in wrytting of my lettr'.<sup>25</sup> This again might suggest that the letters were written to dictation by a household member with a clear hand rather than a trained secretary.<sup>26</sup> The longer letters particularly read as though they had been dictated verbatim. The tone is breathless and the letters repetitive and unstructured, as though she had begun calmly but become carried away. They do not read as though they were carefully designed, or the level of personal emotion well-judged.<sup>27</sup> The subject matter does

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<sup>21</sup> TNA SP1/91, fol. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 61-2, and 72-85.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup> TNA SP1/144, fol. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> For a comparative example, see Malcolm Richardson, "'A Masterful Woman': Elizabeth Stonor and English Women's Letters, 1399-c. 1530", in *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-*

not suggest that she was concerned about self-censorship since her letters cover financial matters, heresy, and detailed descriptions of domestic violence. It appears, therefore, that though we must treat them with customary caution, collective authorship does not necessarily mean we cannot trust the content or expression of these particular letters.

Let us begin by attempting to unravel the narrative of events. The breakdown of Elizabeth and Norfolk's marriage can be divided into two phases: before and after their physical separation, when Norfolk installed her in a house at Redbourn, Hertfordshire.<sup>28</sup> Pinpointing the date of this is necessary for close comparison with Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. It also presents a problem. We are reliant on Elizabeth's letters for this date, as no other sources provide corroboratory evidence, but Elizabeth herself was not consistent. Her most thorough description of the event is in a letter dated October 1537: 'yt ys iiij yeris cu<sup>m</sup> the tweysday in the passyon weke yt he came rydyng all night & lockyt me up in a chamber & toke a way all my joells & my aparell'.<sup>29</sup> It is implied that her removal to Redbourn came about as a direct and swift result of this. This specifies that the separation occurred during the Easter period of 1534. However, where Elizabeth employs this same counting system in other letters, she is not consistent; roughly half of the letters date the separation to 1533, and the rest to 1534. In 1533, the Tuesday in the Passion Week was 8<sup>th</sup> April. Chapuys, stated that the day after this - 9<sup>th</sup> April - the Duke of Norfolk and other noblemen had ridden to the Queen at Ampthill, so it seems unlikely that he was free to ride to

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*1700: Form and Persuasion*, ed. by Jane Crouchman and Ann Crabb (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.43-62 (p. 59).

<sup>28</sup> Her last letter in this sequence, to her brother-in-law the Earl of Westmorland in April 1540, is written from Redbourn (TNA SP1/158, fol. 201). It is likely that she remained at Redbourn at least until the end of Henry's reign.

<sup>29</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.



East Anglia the night before, and still less that he could have returned to court in time to receive this instruction and depart with his colleagues.<sup>30</sup> In 1534, however, Tuesday of the Passion Week was 31<sup>st</sup> March and Norfolk had been in London attending Parliament until its prorogation on 30<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>31</sup> It is entirely possible that he was able to ride to East Anglia that night, and would indeed have been ‘rydyng all night’ to cover the 100-mile distance. Moreover, when asking Cromwell for venison in August 1534 Elizabeth stated that many of her friends who had sent her gifts the previous year no longer dared, in case Norfolk took umbrage. This suggests her imprisonment had taken place *after* the summer of 1533.<sup>32</sup> I have therefore dated the Norfolks’ physical separation to Easter 1534. This means that it did not take place until after the royal marriage had been made void by Henry’s marriage to Anne Boleyn. The potential importance of this will be discussed in further detail later on.

Unravelling Elizabeth and Norfolk’s story up to the point of their separation in 1534 is similarly difficult, again due to the paucity of other sources. This dictates heavy reliance on Elizabeth’s letters. Not only is there her bias to combat but also her hindsight. The surviving letters were all written after the separation of 1534 and were coloured by her increasing bitterness. Nevertheless, certain facts are retrievable. The couple were married in 1512. Thomas Howard, then aged about thirty-nine, was then using the title of Lord Howard, heir to his father’s title of Earl of Surrey, as the family had not yet recovered the Dukedom of Norfolk. Howard was high in the King’s favour; he had been elected to the Order of the Garter in 1510, and was one of the six chief-mourners at the funeral

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<sup>30</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1058.

<sup>31</sup> BL Add. MS 4622, fol. 298.

<sup>32</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 151.

of the short-lived Prince Henry in 1511.<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth, aged about sixteen in 1512, was the eldest daughter of Edward Stafford, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buckingham, and Eleanor Percy.<sup>34</sup> In 1512, Buckingham was England's premier peer in terms of status and wealth. Though he was not often at court, spending most of his time at his great estate of Thornbury in Gloucestershire, he was renowned for conspicuous splendour on state occasions.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth had therefore grown up in a style unmatched by any other English noble household during this period.

Howard had lost his first wife, Anne Plantagenet, in November 1511. According to Elizabeth, he sent word to her father the Duke of Buckingham almost as soon as this occurred in order to negotiate for the hand of one of his three daughters. He then came to Thornbury the following Shrovetide to select one of them.<sup>36</sup> As the eldest, Elizabeth was the natural choice. However, she was already betrothed to her father's ward Ralph Neville, the future Earl of Westmorland. She later wrote that 'my lorde my father had boyth my lorde off westmoreland for me he & I had loved to gether ij yers & my lord my husband had not sent immedyatly word...or ells I had a maryed afore crystynmas to my lorde off westmereland'.<sup>37</sup> Buckingham clearly tried to suggest that Howard marry one of Elizabeth's two younger sisters, but as Elizabeth wrote, 'he wold haue no[ne] off my sister But only me'.<sup>38</sup> She interpreted this as violent attraction, even love, later writing that 'he chase [chose] me for love'.<sup>39</sup> However, as Harris has pointed out, his choice was probably more to do with his

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<sup>33</sup> Head, pp. 26-7.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix D. In a letter of 1537 Elizabeth stated that she was 40, which would make her 16 in 1512 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v).

<sup>35</sup> Davies, 'Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham (1478-1521), magnate', *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013].

<sup>36</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>39</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

desperate need for an heir.<sup>40</sup> All his sons with his first wife had died young, and Elizabeth was the oldest of the Stafford girls at sixteen.<sup>41</sup> It is likely that there was little personal affection involved, and we shall see that this misunderstanding had much to do with the couple's later problems.

Regardless, the couple were married and Elizabeth bore Norfolk's children into the early 1520s.<sup>42</sup> During these years, she cemented her relationship to the Queen. Elizabeth stated in a letter of 1538 that she had been 'dayly waytar in the courtt xvj yeres to gether', which has been taken to mean that she joined the Queen's staff at the beginning of the reign in 1509.<sup>43</sup> This is not absolutely certain; there is no record of Elizabeth at court until 1516 when she carried the Princess Mary at her christening.<sup>44</sup> However, if she did begin service in 1509, sixteen years would have taken her to 1525, and Elizabeth's presence in the surviving household book for the family in 1526-7 suggests that by 1526 she was no longer in daily attendance on the Queen.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless reports from the Spanish ambassador during the early 1530s show that Elizabeth continued to serve the Queen periodically.<sup>46</sup> It is clear that they remained close throughout the 1520s and 30s. Sessions points out that Elizabeth's eldest daughter, Catherine, most likely born shortly after the marriage in 1514, was probably named for the Queen.<sup>47</sup> In January 1531, Chapuys reported that Elizabeth had sent a message to Catherine to say that though the 'opposite party' – i.e. those in favour of the

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<sup>40</sup> Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', p. 373.

<sup>41</sup> The ages of the others are not known save that they were younger than Elizabeth.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix A. She is known to have borne four children; she herself claimed to have had five (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v).

<sup>43</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v; Sessions, p. 42;

<sup>44</sup> BL Harl. MS 3504, fol. 232.

<sup>45</sup> Pembroke College, Cambridge, MS 300.

<sup>46</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 232; *LP* IV, 6738; *LP* V, 216 & 238.

<sup>47</sup> Sessions, p. 42.

divorce – were trying hard to bring her, Elizabeth, over to their side, ‘if the whole world were to set about it they would not make her change’.<sup>48</sup>

In 1521, Elizabeth’s father Edward, Duke of Buckingham, was executed on a charge of high treason for alleged designs upon the throne of England.<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth’s husband, the Duke of Norfolk, sat on the jury which convicted Buckingham and it has been suggested by David Head and Jessie Childs that this caused the beginning of the bad relations between Elizabeth and Norfolk.<sup>50</sup> However, there is no real evidence that this was the case; three years later in 1524 Norfolk requested that she be allowed to join him at his post in the north, a desire that hardly denotes an unhappy marriage.<sup>51</sup>

However, in 1527 Norfolk took a mistress.<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Holland, known as Bess, was the daughter of his household treasurer and chief steward John Holland. Holland came from gentry stock loosely related to John, Lord Hussey, a Lincolnshire courtier and diplomat who would be executed for his part in the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1537.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, Bess became Norfolk’s mistress only after Elizabeth had given Norfolk an ‘heir and spare’ – their two sons, Henry and Thomas, were born c. 1517 and c. 1520. This cements the impression that Norfolk had made this marriage purely in the interests of procreation.

Interestingly, Bess appeared perhaps a year after Henry VIII might first have

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<sup>48</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 619.

<sup>49</sup> Davies, ‘Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham’ *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013].

<sup>50</sup> Childs, p. 25; Head, p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> BL Cotton MS Caligula B VI, fol. 429v.

<sup>52</sup> The date of Bess’s ascendancy is generally said to be 1526 (see Harris, ‘Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style’, Head, p. 251) because in a letter dated as 26 June 1537, Elizabeth wrote that ‘ytt ys a xj yere syn my lorde my husbond furst fell in love wyth hyr’, thus placing this event in 1526 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v). However, this letter cannot have been written in 1537 because in it Elizabeth describes Lord Hussey as ‘dyed last & was by heddett’, and on 26 June 1537 this had not yet occurred (see R. W. Hoyle, ‘John Hussey, Baron Hussey (1465/6-1537), *nobleman and alleged rebel*’, *ODNB* [accessed 10 January 2013]). The resulting re-dating of this letter to 1538 thus re-dates Bess’s arrival to 1527.

<sup>53</sup> Hoyle, ‘John, Hussey, Baron Hussey’, *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013].

become interested in Anne Boleyn.<sup>54</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Norfolk was copying Henry in taking a mistress himself. We do not know that Bess was Norfolk's first dalliance outside the marriage bed, and Anne was certainly not Henry's. Elizabeth was unable to accept her husband's straying, later writing that she 'wold not becotent to suffer ye baud & ye harlotte...to be styll in ye house'.<sup>55</sup> Serious discord between them dates from this point.

Conflict at home was mirrored in their lives at court. As Henry VIII's Great Matter took shape, the Norfolks aligned themselves accordingly. The Duke's unswerving loyalty to the King, alongside opportunism, led him to support the royal desire for divorce regardless of his private opinion.<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth, however, took the opposite path. She clearly had cause to identify strongly with the Queen's predicament.<sup>57</sup> The parallel between the two women must have become increasingly and painfully apparent to Elizabeth when Bess Holland became a member of Anne Boleyn's household.<sup>58</sup> Chapuys reported that Elizabeth spent the early 1530s actively supporting the Queen rather than the Howards. She used a gift of oranges as a way to smuggle a letter from Gregorio Cassale, the King's representative in Rome, to the Queen in November 1530, thus helping her to keep abreast of the latest developments.<sup>59</sup> Though Chapuys was concerned that she might have been doing this on the orders of her husband

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<sup>54</sup> This is debated, but there is consensus that the first concrete indicator of Henry's interest in Anne is his application to the Pope for a dispensation to marry the sister of a previous mistress in August 1527; it is agreed that their relationship must have begun quite some time earlier in order to have reached this level of commitment by this date. See Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 84-90; George Bernard, *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 23-6.

<sup>55</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>56</sup> Head, pp. 109-110, suggests that the Duke supported the divorce only because it represented the royal will, and not because he personally sought to place his niece on the throne.

<sup>57</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v: 'I was dayly waytar in the courtt xvj yeres to gether'.

<sup>58</sup> It is not clear when this occurred, but in September 1533 Chapuys described Bess as 'a young lady of the King's concubine, called Holland': *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1130.

<sup>59</sup> *LP IV*, 6738.

in order to gauge the Queen's reaction, this seems unlikely in light of the rest of her actions towards the Queen.<sup>60</sup> When the King complained to Norfolk about Anne's behaviour, Elizabeth reported it to the Queen, 'telling her moreover that her husband [Norfolk] was in marvellous sorrow and tribulation, and that she saw quite well she [Anne] would be considered the ruin of all her family, and that if God wished that she should continue in her fantasy it would be a very good thing for the Queen.'<sup>61</sup> A month later, Elizabeth told the Queen of a letter she had seen regarding the progress of the case in Rome, and was promptly banished from court 'because she spoke too freely, and declared herself more than they liked for the Queen'.<sup>62</sup> Quite clearly Elizabeth was in a position to be able to hear and see such things, and Norfolk had perhaps not yet realised that she was using this to her advantage.

It is unclear how long she was banished for. We might speculate that this the beginning of Norfolk's attempts to house her elsewhere, perhaps a sign of the domestic trouble she had been causing with objections to Bess's presence. A letter from Elizabeth's brother Henry, Lord Stafford, sent to both Norfolk and Cromwell in 1533 relates how he had been asked several times to take his sister into his own household to try to control her and bring her around to Norfolk's point of view. It is clear that he had repeatedly refused as his letter takes the tone of a person weary of lengthy argument: he declared that if he thought he could do any good, 'I wold not onlye receyue her in to my house but I wold fetcche her on my fete at London', but 'your grace ys assuryd by long experyence I can do no

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>61</sup> *LP* V, 216.

<sup>62</sup> *LP* V, 238.

good'.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that Norfolk had first asked Stafford to do this when Elizabeth was first sent from court in 1531.

Thanks to Stafford's refusal, in June 1533 Elizabeth and Norfolk were still living in the same household at Kenninghall in Norfolk. Elizabeth allegedly refused to attend Anne Boleyn's coronation in this month, an act of outright defiance against her husband, her family, and the King.<sup>64</sup> By September relations were so bad that her brother-in-law Lord Bergavenny had become involved in mediation. Chapuys reported that Bergavenny had been 'called to court' and sent to Elizabeth 'to make an arrangement between her and the Duke her husband, whom she would not see or hear'.<sup>65</sup> Norfolk for his part also refused to attempt a meeting until Bergavenny had smoothed his path by 'promising that the Duke should henceforth be a good husband', though what he meant by this is uncertain – Norfolk clearly had no intention of leaving Bess.<sup>66</sup> We do not know whether Bergavenny was successful in this instance but any *rapprochement* that he negotiated was only temporary.

Six months later Norfolk took decisive action. As described earlier, on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 1534 – 'the tweysday in the passyon weke' - he left Parliament in London and rode all night to Kenninghall in Norfolk, where he locked Elizabeth into her chamber and took away her valuable jewels and apparel.<sup>67</sup> It seems likely that this was in reaction to a now unknown 'last straw'; perhaps a fight between Elizabeth and Bess, or some sort of publicly embarrassing declaration from Elizabeth regarding his infidelity. In her letters, she made a repeated allegation of domestic violence, claiming that her husband

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<sup>63</sup> TNA SP1/76, fols. 38-9.

<sup>64</sup> *LP* VI, 585.

<sup>65</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1130.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>67</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v; BL Add. MS 4622, fol. 298.

had ‘sett hys wemen to bynde me tyll blod came out att my fyngars endes & pynnacullyt me & satt on my brest tyll I spett blod’.<sup>68</sup> If true – we have only Elizabeth’s word for it – it seems possible that it occurred at this time. After this, Norfolk moved Elizabeth to a house in Redbourn near Dunstable, Hertfordshire, and left her there with a small household and an allowance of £200 a year.<sup>69</sup> Henry VIII had behaved similarly towards the Queen, ordering her away from court to The More in July 1531, from thence to Ampthill in 1533, Buckden in Huntingdonshire later the same year, and finally to Kimbolton, also in Huntingdonshire, in May 1534.<sup>70</sup>

The similarity went further. Norfolk appears to have followed his wife’s imprisonment with a request for divorce, and it is not difficult to imagine where he obtained the idea. The dating of this is uncertain but was some time before 1537. In November this year Elizabeth wrote that ‘after he had put me a way he send hys to chaplens master burley & Sir thoms reyner yff I wold be devorsed he wold gyffe me all my joells & all my aparell & a grett partt off hys platt & off hys stuff off houshold: & I rebukett hys prests & then he wrott yt wt hys owne hand on the nest day’.<sup>71</sup> This is a significant statement for a number of reasons. The fact that Norfolk was using members of his household as go-betweens suggests that their marriage had probably become household gossip by this point. But most intriguing is the question of what, exactly, Norfolk meant when he asked Elizabeth to ‘be devorsed’. The term ‘divorce’ was something of an umbrella phrase during this period; as Helmholz explains, it was used to describe

<sup>68</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v. This allegation was repeated in letters written in 1538 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v), and 1539 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 391).

<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth claimed to receive £50 a quarter from 1536 onwards, and to have twenty servants in 1538: TNA SP1/106, fol. 219, BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

<sup>70</sup> C. S. L Davies and John Edwards, ‘Katherine (1485-1536), Queen of England, first consort of Henry VIII’, *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013].

<sup>71</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 389.



both annulments and judicial separations.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, Houlbrooke has commented that the technical differences between annulments and separations were probably ‘blurred’ in most peoples’ minds.<sup>73</sup> We must note that the description of Norfolk’s request comes from Elizabeth. We do not know for certain that Norfolk himself used the word ‘divorce’, though it seems likely. If he did, it certainly seems that he was confused over its meaning. What the King wanted from Catherine of Aragon was an annulment, a declaration that the marriage had never existed. There was not, realistically speaking, any chance that Norfolk would be able to secure an annulment as his marriage to Elizabeth had certainly been lawful and valid and annulments were difficult to secure even when this was not the case.<sup>74</sup> If Norfolk had intended this, he would have had to go either to a public hearing in an ecclesiastical court, or directly to his bishop, and either plead that Elizabeth was adulterous, or allow her to plead his cruelty.<sup>75</sup> If the former, he would, as far as is known, have had to fabricate his evidence, and given his emphatic denial of the latter in 1536 it is highly unlikely that he would have allowed her to do this.<sup>76</sup>

Did he hope that Cromwell might step in and produce some legislation for him? In later years there were a few isolated cases where noblemen divorced their wives by Act of Parliament, notably William Parr, later Marquess of Northampton, but these did not occur until the 1550s and it is doubtful whether any Parliament in the disturbed context of the early 1530s would have allowed

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<sup>72</sup> R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), p. 74.

<sup>73</sup> R. A. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford, OUP, 1979), p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Helmholz, pp. 74-111.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-111.

<sup>76</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 394-394v. Elizabeth claimed that in 1519 whilst she was in labour with her daughter Mary, Norfolk had dragged her out of bed and around the house by her hair and wounded her in the head with a dagger. Norfolk wrote to Cromwell specifically to deny this allegation, expostulating that ‘ther is no man on lyve that wold handle a woman in child bed or that sort nor for my part wold not so haue done for all that I am worth’.

such a thing, particularly not when reform of the ecclesiastical court system appeared imminent.<sup>77</sup> The fact that he would put forward what seems like such an ill-considered proposal demonstrates the extent to which the King's Great Matter inspired the aristocracy.

It also raises another question regarding Norfolk's intentions. Did he mean to marry Bess? Bess had no fortune, and since he already had heirs he had no need to ensure the legitimacy of any children she might bear him. Unlike Henry VIII, needing to marry Anne Boleyn because he desperately needed a legitimate heir, there was no practical reason for Norfolk to marry Bess. Moreover, a church court divorce would not have given him the freedom to remarry. A separation *a mensa et thoro*, from bed and board, forbade remarriage to both parties during one another's lifetime. Yet unless marriage to Bess was his aim, there was no other obvious advantage to his divorcing Elizabeth. It would, in practice, change nothing, as they already lived separately and he was already supporting her financially. In the event of a divorce, Elizabeth would probably also have continued to bear the title of Duchess of Norfolk.<sup>78</sup> Unlikely though it seems, perhaps Norfolk really did intend to marry his mistress for the reason of love alone. The parallel with Henry VIII is clear: not only did the two men find themselves in remarkably similar situations, but both tried to solve their problems in largely unpractical ways, as though legal exceptions might easily be made for them. Norfolk appears to have been unaware that the available options would not allow him to remarry, which may mean we should question the calibre of his advisers. More importantly, it may suggest that he saw himself on a par

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<sup>77</sup> James, 'A Tudor Divorce', pp. 199-204; E. J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 67.

<sup>78</sup> Katherine, Lady Daubeney, continued to be known as 'Lady Daubeney' even after her divorce from Henry, Lord Daubeney; when he was elevated to the Earldom of Bridgwater in 1538 she bore the title of Countess even though they were still separated.

with his King. This is clear evidence that the King's divorce had a substantial impact on the marriages of some members of the aristocracy.

It is entirely possible that Elizabeth's blunt refusal to divorce was born out of this. Elizabeth clearly took some pleasure in relating to Cromwell how she had denied Norfolk, writing that 'he had lever then a thosand li he colde haue brogth me to haue ben devorsed'.<sup>79</sup> Her refusal is somewhat surprising given her circumstances. She had refused, and continued to refuse, any reconciliation, clearly intimating that she did not want to return to him. The only practical difference that divorce would make to her was a positive one: Norfolk's offer of her clothes, jewels and household goods amounted to a return of her accustomed status. This strongly suggests that her refusal was due to jealousy and distrust of her husband – she wrote in 1537 that 'he was all ways a grett player' and 'he can speke fayre as woll to hys en[e]my as to hys frynde'.<sup>80</sup> In this she resembled other women undergoing marital separation. Alice Friedman notes that Lady Elizabeth Willoughby, the wife of Sir Francis Willoughby, mingled expressions of reconciliation with those of doubt and mistrust in her letters of the late sixteenth-century. However, while Lady Willoughby returned to her husband in 1588 because, according to Friedman, 'her years of isolation had taught her the price of defying authority and social conventions', Elizabeth stuck to her refusal.<sup>81</sup> As in Norfolk's case it is easy to see what – or rather, who – might have inspired Elizabeth's refusal to divorce. It has been convincingly argued by

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<sup>79</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 389.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v, 389.

<sup>81</sup> Alice T. Friedman, "Portrait of a Marriage": The Willoughby Letters of 1585-1586', *Signs* 11:3 (1986), 542-55.

Sessions that this was an informed choice designed as a direct signal of support for Elizabeth's mentor, the Queen.<sup>82</sup>

Norfolk's attempt at divorce may also have been behind an apparent change in attitude on Elizabeth's part around 1536. Her letters suggest that initially she had been persuaded to sue to Norfolk to take her back – by 1536 she had written him what she described as three 'gentille letters' on the orders of Cromwell and the King himself – but apparently Norfolk did not reply, and so her aim changed.<sup>83</sup> She ceased to sue for reconciliation, stating in December 1536 that 'frome this day forthwarde I wolle never sue to the kynge / nor to noon oder to desire my lorde my husband to taake me again'.<sup>84</sup> Instead, she stepped up the suit she had begun in 1534 and continued to petition for 'a better lyvyng', 'for I haye butte 1 li quarter/ and here I lye in a dere countre'.<sup>85</sup> In 1537, spurred by her daughter Mary's attempts to secure her jointure after the death of her husband Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, Elizabeth began to petition for her own jointure.<sup>86</sup> She was not entitled to this until Norfolk was dead, and this shows that she considered herself as good as widowed. She had never ceased to complain about her poor standard of living, and perhaps the Queen's last years, spent in increasingly poverty, weighed on her mind.

Again, like the Queen, Elizabeth's situation was not improved by the fact that her father was no longer alive. Fathers often supported their daughters in circumstances of marriage failure – witness George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury

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<sup>82</sup> Sessions, pp. 41-68.

<sup>83</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 392-3.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 392-3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v and 388-388v.

and his daughter the countess of Northumberland during the same period.<sup>87</sup> Had her father been alive, Elizabeth would almost certainly have asked for his help. On the other hand, fathers were not obliged to support their daughters if the daughter was perceived to be in the wrong – when Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, asked Cromwell to mediate between his daughter Lady Powis and her husband, he told him only to favour the lady if she promised to live in ‘such an honest sort as shalbe to yo[ur] hono[ur] and myn’, a clear sign that he was not convinced of his daughter’s cause.<sup>88</sup> Doubtless Norfolk would also have petitioned Elizabeth’s father and it is impossible to know what might have happened.

Elizabeth’s other relatives were not only less influential, but apparently less willing to support her, with the possible exception of her mother Eleanor, duchess of Buckingham. Eleanor survived until 1530 and thus would have witnessed the arrival of Bess and the beginning of the trouble. There is evidence that she had reacted similarly to her own husband’s affairs and it seems plausible that Elizabeth would have approached her as a sympathetic listener.<sup>89</sup> Naturally any such private conversations have left no archival trace, and any letters on the subject have not survived. If Elizabeth did approach her mother it did no good, and after Eleanor’s death she found herself increasingly isolated. Her one remaining male blood relative was her younger brother Henry, Lord Stafford. However, his father’s execution for treason in 1521 had left him painfully eager to prove his loyalty to the Crown – Davies has described him as ‘a man with great pride of family, but clearly determined to avoid the dangers which

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<sup>87</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 51-3, 177-8; Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4.

<sup>88</sup> Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, p. 174.

<sup>89</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 179; see Harris, ‘Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style’, p. 374.

threatened him from his royal ancestry and marital connections'.<sup>90</sup> He was not likely to go against Cromwell's wishes, and we have seen that he was deeply censorious of Elizabeth's behaviour. There is no evidence that either of her two younger sisters, the Countess of Westmorland and Lady Bergavenny, attempted to support her, and in fact her brother-in-law Lord Bergavenny had tried to reconcile her to Norfolk in 1531.<sup>91</sup> By 1536 her paternal aunt Anne, Countess of Huntingdon, had become involved, writing to ask Elizabeth to deny the 'articles' she had written, presumably outlining Norfolk's failures.<sup>92</sup>

This shows that she did not receive any support from any of her immediate family. Instead, they collaborated to try to force her into submission. What must have been especially painful for Elizabeth was that her two eldest children, Henry, aged seventeen in 1534, and Mary, aged fifteen, also took their father's part, no doubt motivated by their need for his financial backing.<sup>93</sup> The one person who did exert effort in her favour was her former betrothed, now her brother-in-law, the earl of Westmorland, who tried to persuade Norfolk to end Elizabeth's house arrest.<sup>94</sup> This level of isolation was unusual. Most cases of marriage breakdown demonstrate some level of support for both sides - as was the case for Catherine of Aragon - and this clearly shows how a lack of influential male relatives could alter the course of marriage failure for most women.

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<sup>90</sup> C. S. L. Davies, 'Henry Stafford, tenth Baron Stafford (1501-1563), *nobleman*' *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013].

<sup>91</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1130.

<sup>92</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth wrote in 1536: 'I maye say I was bourne in an unhappy hower to be matched with such a ungracious husband and so ungracious a sonne and a doughter' (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3).

<sup>94</sup> TNA SP1/158, fol. 201.

The similarity between Elizabeth and Catherine of Aragon lay not only in their situations, but also in the way that they reacted to these. Both were absolutely implacable. In 1528 the Queen informed Cardinal Campeggio that ‘neither the whole kingdom on the one hand, nor any great punishment on the other, although she might be torn limb from limb, should compel her to alter this opinion; and that if after death she should return to life, rather than change it, she would prefer to die over again.’<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth declared repeatedly that nothing would make her accept Norfolk’s adultery, not ‘atte the kynges comandemet nor at your desire / I woll nat doo it for noo frende nor kynnge I have lyvyng’.<sup>96</sup> In her infamous speech to the King at Blackfriars in June 1529 the Queen referred to herself as a ‘poor woman’, friendless with no ‘impartial counsel’. She emphasised her performance of wifely duties during their marriage such as obedience and child-bearing.<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth also used the fact that she had borne Norfolk five children as a reason why he should not desert her and claimed that ‘now gentylman nor gentylwoman dare not cu<sup>m</sup> at me: but seche as my lorde apoyntes to know my mynde & to connsyll me after hys facyan’.<sup>98</sup> Scholars such as Laura Gowing have shown that women with marital difficulties facing a court of law or other judge played upon these tropes to emphasise their victimisation and elicit sympathy, so the fact that both women used them is not necessarily unusual.<sup>99</sup>

The similarities went further. The case for the Queen’s divorce depended on the way the marriage was made, and her virginal state at its beginning. She

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<sup>95</sup> *LP* IV, 4875.

<sup>96</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>97</sup> Giles Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon: Henry’s Spanish Queen* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp. 309-11.

<sup>98</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 389.

<sup>99</sup> Foyster, p. 83; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 42-58.

emphasised that to suggest her marriage was unlawful was to ask the court to slander and dishonour its makers, Ferdinand of Aragon and Henry VII.

Elizabeth's divorce rested on no such pretexts and yet she too made much of these things. She repeatedly discussed the arrangements made by her father in good faith after Norfolk had persuaded him to allow the marriage, insinuating that this deserved to be honoured in her father's memory: 'my lord my father payd ij thozand mark wyth me wyth other grett charges as I have wrytten to yow afore: weche my my lorde my husbonde hath for goton now he hath so meche welth & honnre'.<sup>100</sup> Just as the Queen argued that her advisers were all in Henry's pocket and were too afraid to disobey him, Elizabeth wrote that she had no advisors except those sent by Norfolk, and that she could not trust them.<sup>101</sup> This clearly shows that Elizabeth strongly identified with both the Queen's situation and her reaction to it, structuring her own defence along the same lines. This cements the idea that Elizabeth made the Queen's fight her own.

There is no evidence to show how the Queen herself regarded this. She died in January 1536, before much of Elizabeth's struggle. The King's reaction, though, is revealed through her letters. It is clear that virtually everybody perceived Elizabeth to be in the wrong. Yet the letters show that the King was keen for them to reconcile, not to divorce as he himself had done. When Elizabeth stated that she had written 'ij gentille letters' to her husband, she also reminded Cromwell that one of these had been written 'by the kynges comandment'.<sup>102</sup> Further to this, in 1539 she mentioned an occasion where she had been 'wt ye kynges grace at dustable iij yeres & a halfe a gone & put my matr to hys grace to make an end & to your lordsheppe / than my lord my husbad

<sup>100</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 389.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 392-3.



refusyd yt'.<sup>103</sup> This would have been the middle of 1535, at which point she was still suing to Norfolk for reconciliation. This shows that the King was trying to engineer her return to Norfolk, not the couple's divorce. Apparently he did not see the similarity between his own 'Great Matter' and that of the Duke, but understood his own divorce as a unique circumstance not to be emulated by his aristocracy. This is a significant, though not altogether surprising, insight into Henry's divorce mentality and its effect on the nobility, for undoubtedly Norfolk believed that he could successfully follow the King's example, and must therefore have thought that the King would support him in this. The evidence does not show whether the King's reaction came as a surprise to either the Duke or Duchess. Clearly the King had not intended there to be any transfer of ideas from monarch to subject regarding the sanctity of marriage. Perhaps the fact that Norfolk was not 'childless' but had two sons played a role in the King's understanding.

Reading between the lines of Elizabeth's letters gives a clear sense of her emotional reaction to the breakdown of her marriage, and this too is important in understanding her behaviour. She was not afraid that Norfolk might leave her, but that he no longer loved her. Several times she used the word 'love' to describe Norfolk's affection for Bess.<sup>104</sup> Yet in the same letters she also laid claim to Norfolk's love, insisting that 'he chase me for love'.<sup>105</sup> Accounting for the hindsight of her letters, it seems that what distressed her was not Norfolk's physical adultery, but what she viewed as his emotional betrayal. In light of this it seems plausible that Elizabeth had fallen in love with Norfolk early on in their marriage, buoyed by the belief that he loved her. It may have been easier for her

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<sup>103</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 391.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 388-388v, 391.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 388-388v, 390-390v.

to do this in order to get past the feelings she claimed to have had for her previous betrothed Ralph Neville, heir to the Earl of Westmorland.<sup>106</sup>

Was this unusual? Marriages of convenience were the norm among the nobility, and indeed Elizabeth's betrothal to Ralph Neville was just such a match. Harris has argued that noble girls understood this and cooperated with it.<sup>107</sup> Yet there is no reason to suppose that love never occurred, and it is entirely possible that a sixteen-year-old girl might have believed herself to be in love with her betrothed. In any case, Elizabeth cooperated with the Howard marriage. What does appear to have been unusual and eccentric, as Harris has argued, was Elizabeth's very public objection to her husband's infidelity.<sup>108</sup> However, Harris also explains that there is so little surviving evidence of women's emotional reactions to such things that we cannot assume that Elizabeth's emotional reaction, i.e. her jealousy, was unusual, only her willingness to publicise it.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, there is some evidence for noblewomen objecting to their husbands' adulteries during this period. We have seen that Elizabeth's mother Eleanor, Duchess of Buckingham, appears to have reacted angrily to her husband's affair with a member of their household, refusing to have the girl within sight or sound afterwards.<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth's niece Dorothy Neville-de Vere, Countess of Oxford, also left her husband and refused to return in 1546, listing adulteries and bigamous marriage among her reasons.<sup>111</sup>

Even though Elizabeth appeared to have given up hope of reconciliation after 1535, pushing instead for a financial settlement, her language still suggests

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<sup>106</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>107</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 55-9.

<sup>108</sup> Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', pp. 373-4.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 373-4.

<sup>110</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 179.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Hughes, 'John de Vere, sixteenth Earl of Oxford (1516-1562)', *ODNB* [accessed 21 August 2012].

that love and jealousy were the motivating factors, and that secretly, she may not have given up hope of her husband's return. Her tone when she described her entry into house arrest in 1534 could be read as one of pride: 'he came rydyng all night & lockyt me up in a chamber'.<sup>112</sup> She had made him leave his business and had claimed his attention for herself.<sup>113</sup> She wrote repeatedly throughout the 1530s that she was 'full det<sup>er</sup>met' never to come into his company again, yet one letter shows that in 1536 she went to London in order to do just that. Norfolk refused to see her, writing to Cromwell, 'my lord I requyre you to seue to her in no wise to come wher I am for the same shuld not only put me to more troble...but myght geve me occasion to handle her otherwise then I haye done yet'.<sup>114</sup> Many of her letters were filled with vehement declarations that she would never return to him: 'I woll not do it atte the kynges comanndemet nor at your desire / I woll nat doo it for noo frende nor kynnge I haye lyvyng'.<sup>115</sup> Often, after just such a speech, she requested that Cromwell show Norfolk the letter, revealing that Norfolk was her intended audience all along, the words designed to provoke his anger and attention.<sup>116</sup> If she could not make him love her, she could at least make him angry.

At first glance this strategy does not appear to have been designed to encourage a positive outcome. Anger, jealousy and betrayal were not legitimate reasons for favourable intervention, and neither were they likely to induce Norfolk to increase her annuity. However, as Daybell and others have shown,

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<sup>112</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>113</sup> BL Add. MS 4622, fol. 298.

<sup>114</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 394-394v.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 392-3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 392-3: 'my lord I pray you showe my lord my husband this letter'.

letter-writing was largely an exercise in the art of persuasion.<sup>117</sup> Letters such as these were a woman's opportunity to tell her side of the story, and thus to make an emotional impact on the reader which might induce him to take favourable action. This means that her version of events must be treated with care. One of the most disturbing elements of this marriage breakdown was Elizabeth's repeated allegation of domestic violence. She claimed several times that her husband 'sett hys wemen to bynde me tyll blod came out att my fyngars endes & pynnacullyt me & satt on my brest tyll I spett blod'.<sup>118</sup> She also, according to a letter from her husband to Thomas Cromwell in 1536, accused him of abuse dating back to 1519, claiming that 'when she had be in chyld bed ij nyghts and a day of my doghter of richmond I [Norfolk] shuld draw her out of her bed by the here of the hed aboute the howse and wt my dagar geve her a wonde in the hed'.<sup>119</sup> Harris has warned that there is no way to prove this.<sup>120</sup> The fact that these allegations were made as part of a petition for redress would further have encouraged exaggeration, since, as Daybell argues, the truth or otherwise of the events that she narrated would not have been the point; the point was the way in which she described them.<sup>121</sup>

Narratives given in such circumstances were designed to be emotive and to strike familiar chords with for the reader. Hence, as Gowing has shown, a witness to adultery invariably stated in court that he had seen it through a hole in the wall.<sup>122</sup> Several of the images and stories given in Elizabeth's letters bear a

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<sup>117</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 240-6; Lynne Magnusson, 'A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors' Letters', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 51-66.

<sup>118</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v. This allegation was repeated in letters written in 1538 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v), and 1539 (BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 391).

<sup>119</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 394-394v.

<sup>120</sup> Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', p. 375.

<sup>121</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 245-6.

<sup>122</sup> Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp. 42-56 and 189-90.

strong resemblance to those commonly seen in a legal deposition. Although she claimed that she had no ‘connsayle [to] put my self in wrytting of my lettr’, we know that she used an amanuensis, who might plausibly have been able to advise her, or even embellish her stories.<sup>123</sup> If her secretary was simply a servant able to write, not a trained professional able to advise her on structure and content, we must assume Elizabeth herself possessed sufficient knowledge and common sense to be able to utilise these legal tropes, and in either case her passionate speeches must therefore be treated with caution.

Some of the images she evoked can be ascribed to common sense. It is obvious that a woman seeking aid or redress would seek to portray herself as a victim, and would play upon the trope of female weakness in order to gain sympathy. Daybell has shown that this is immensely common in aristocratic women’s letters.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps the most overt example of this comes from a letter written by Gertrude Blount-Courtenay, Marchioness of Exeter, to Cromwell in 1533, excusing her support for the blasphemous Nun of Kent: she stated ‘howe much less marveyl it is y<sup>t</sup> I being a woman hath be[e]n thus deluted by such pestilent hipocrypt[es].<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth went further by claiming that her victimisation was down to fate, describing herself as ‘bourne in an unhappy hower.’<sup>126</sup> Hardwick tells us that in early modern France this emotive image is often found in court cases relating to sexuality and violence, particularly allegations of violence during pregnancy.<sup>127</sup> This, of course, is one of the things that Elizabeth

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<sup>123</sup> TNA SP1/144, fol. 16.

<sup>124</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 255.

<sup>125</sup> TNA SP1/80, fol. 116.

<sup>126</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 392-3.

<sup>127</sup> Julie Hardwick, *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. 95.

claimed to have suffered.<sup>128</sup> Who would not feel sympathy? Yet on balance it appears this was not true. In December 1536 Norfolk wrote to Cromwell explicitly to deny this accusation, and was clearly distressed, declaring heatedly that ‘ther is no man on lyve that wold handle a woman in child bed or that sort nor for my part wold not so haue done for all that I am worth.’<sup>129</sup> Amussen tells us that it was unusual for a husband to bother denying domestic violence during this period. If confronted, they generally admitted the abuse but contextualised it as a form of legitimate correction.<sup>130</sup> For Norfolk to deny it so vehemently goes some way to suggesting that it was a legal fiction on Elizabeth’s part. This shows how a mediator such as Cromwell was perceived to function much like a law court, and letters written to him on the subject could be structured like court depositions. It also shows that Elizabeth was competent with this form of expression, which makes it difficult to know how to interpret her letters with accuracy.

Her other repeated allegation, that Norfolk ordered the women of her household to tie her up and beat her, is less easy to dismiss. Elizabeth used exactly the same words to describe this event in several separate letters, stating that they had bound her ‘tyll blod came out att my fyngars endes & pynnacullyt me & satt on my brest tyll I spett blod’.<sup>131</sup> Was this because it was true, or because she had described it so many times that she now believed it to be true? She had every reason to stretch the truth, but this was not a prevalent image taken from popular culture like the trope of violence during pregnancy. One would think that a story of cruelty directly from Norfolk’s hands, rather than at the

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<sup>128</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 394-394v.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 394-394v.

<sup>130</sup> Amussen, p. 73.

<sup>131</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

hands of the household women, would have been more effective. Moreover, Norfolk never wrote to deny this accusation.

Other strategies employed by Elizabeth included vocalising her emotions in terms of status and honour. As Sessions has pointed out, these were key frames of reference for the nobility.<sup>132</sup> She never openly objected to Bess because Norfolk was in love with her. Instead, she wrote his betrayal as a disregard for her status, and thus, implicitly, his own. She reminded Cromwell that when Norfolk had first married her he had had ‘but lytyll to take to’, that his status as holder of a mere courtesy title had been lower than her own as a daughter of the Duke of Buckingham.<sup>133</sup> Their marriage had augmented his rank and this, in her opinion, deserved his loyalty. Elizabeth never seems to have moved past this perception. Naturally, these things had since altered; Lord Howard had become the Duke of Norfolk, and he now had more power and status than Elizabeth could hope to attain on her own account. Her brother Lord Stafford tried in vain to get her to see this, ‘praing her to call to remembrance the greate honor that she is come to by that nobil ma[n] her husband’.<sup>134</sup> But her insistence that her rank was above his suggests that she had never appreciated this change. Her implication is that without her, Norfolk’s status, his worth, and his nobility were all lessened – and once again, if that were the case, he was unfit for the positions he held. The words she employed to describe Bess were all insults relating to rank and status: ‘harlot’, ‘churles dort[er]’, ‘quene’, ‘that drabbe’.<sup>135</sup> The fact that Norfolk had chosen Bess, a woman of no rank at all,

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<sup>132</sup> Sessions, pp. 42-5. See also Garthine Walker, ‘Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ser., 6 (1996), 235-245.

<sup>133</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>134</sup> TNA SP1/76, fol. 39.

<sup>135</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

suggested that he was careless of his own nobility, for as Elizabeth declared, ‘yt ys spokon off fer & nere to hys grett dyshonnr & schame’.<sup>136</sup> This tainted her by association. Though her refusal to countenance Norfolk’s adultery may have begun through simple jealousy, it was influenced by considerations of status and honour, and thus took the form of a fight against the erosion of her own identity.

The evidence suggests that Norfolk kept Bess within the marital household – she could not have been among Anne Boleyn’s ladies-in-waiting as early as 1527 because the future Queen then had none. This compromised Elizabeth’s status. In her household, she could expect to rule undisputed as Norfolk’s wife, his partner in domestic matters, but Bess’s presence as the preferred one undoubtedly brought her into conflict with Elizabeth. It is likely that it also divided the allegiance of the rest of the household; Elizabeth later wrote that she was physically abused by the women at Kenninghall, and since the only women ordinarily within a noble household were those in service to its lady, it is probable that these women were Elizabeth’s own maids who either chose or were ordered to take Bess’s part.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, a 1547 inventory of Kenninghall shows that by this date Bess had been given her own suite of rooms on the storey above the Duke’s.<sup>138</sup> If this were the case while Elizabeth still lived there it is easy to see that such privileges would have upset the normal hierarchy of the household. Thus there was a metaphorical chasm between the Duke’s household and societal expectation of godly order.

All these were issues that Catherine of Aragon had also had to negotiate. Anne Boleyn had received her own suite of rooms in the King’s palaces by Christmas 1528, and in 1533 Catherine had been demoted from Queen to

<sup>136</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 388-388v.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 388-388v; Mertes, p. 57.

<sup>138</sup> TNA LR2/117.



‘Princess Dowager’.<sup>139</sup> The evidence shows that she reacted angrily to this, scribbling out the new title wherever she found it. She continued to use the letters ‘H’ and ‘K’ on her servants’ liveries after this.<sup>140</sup> Tremlett also argues that one of the ways in which Henry tried to subdue her was to take away her royal train when he moved her from Ampthill to Buckden in July 1533, knowing that removing the trappings of queenship from Catherine while Anne still possessed them would wound her deeply.<sup>141</sup>

The similarity between the King’s ‘Great Matter’ and the Norfolks’ marriage breakdown is striking, and there appears to be no other case of aristocratic marital strife that so closely mirrors the royal divorce. This changes our understanding of the Howard dynasty, with implications for other aristocratic families; women as well as men were deeply and personally involved with the central political issues of their day. This is particularly the case regarding the situation faced, and the reactions given, by Elizabeth and Catherine of Aragon. This shows how strongly the Queen’s situation could resonate with other early modern women, and the impact that this could have: uncovering women’s roles here reveals that they were not mere passive observers of politics, but active participants. The similarity between Norfolk and Henry VIII is more complex. It is evident that Norfolk took his cues from the King. The Queen was banished to her separate, isolated household and her marriage declared void in 1531; Norfolk began attempting to place Elizabeth in a separate household from at least the beginning of 1533. He finally achieved this in 1534, and requested a divorce at some point between 1534 and 1536. The fact that he sought what he termed a divorce, but was apparently unclear on what this meant and what it allowed him

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<sup>139</sup> Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, p. 99.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183, and Tremlett, pp. 378-9.

<sup>141</sup> Tremlett, pp. 379-80.

to achieve, cements the impression that he was imitating Henry VIII. Henry's continuing attempts to reconcile the couple, however, suggest that for him, imitation was not the sincerest form of flattery. He did not appear to condone Norfolk's suit for divorce, which shows that he considered his own situation to be an extenuating circumstance. Though Harris has used this episode to highlight early modern understanding of the double-standard between men and women, it clearly also reveals Henry's understanding of a double-standard between monarch and subject regarding infidelity, divorce, and remarriage.<sup>142</sup> Thus the Norfolks' marriage breakdown provides valuable insight not only into the complications of marital separation during this period, but into contemporary understanding of the relationship between monarchy and aristocracy.

How did this marriage breakdown affect the rest of the Howard and Stafford families more widely? It is abundantly clear that Elizabeth became an embarrassment to them, and that the Staffords in particular were keen to ensure that she conformed to early modern standards, accepted Norfolk's adulteries, and returned to the marital household. This suggests that women's behaviour was perceived to be important to their families' outward reputations; that Elizabeth's absence at Anne Boleyn's coronation was remarked upon supports this perception. However, Elizabeth remained isolated at Redbourn until at least 1540, and does not appear in any sources for court or family events during this period. This gives insight into the way aristocratic families functioned at court when faced with a situation like this one; nobody, even a Duchess of Norfolk, was indispensable. Other women of the family, particularly Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and Elizabeth's daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond,

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<sup>142</sup> Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', pp. 371-82.

simply stepped into her place.<sup>143</sup> There is no evidence that Norfolk or any other member of either family suffered ridicule or even disfavour at court due to the marriage breakdown, and Elizabeth was able to reconcile with her brother and sisters during the 1540s.<sup>144</sup> It is clear, however, that her recalcitrance fractured this branch of the family. Elizabeth does not appear ever to have reconciled with her two eldest children, Henry and Mary, and her behaviour left a lasting impression on Norfolk, who, as this thesis will argue, struggled to cope with rebellious women for the rest of his life. This chapter clearly demonstrates the benefits of placing women centre stage. By uncovering a new female perspective, it becomes clear that the royal divorce struck at the heart of the Howard dynasty in ways hitherto unappreciated. Not only does this enhance the existing Howard narrative, but it offers new insights into the King's 'Great Matter' and its effect upon the aristocracy.

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<sup>143</sup> *LP* VI, 585.

<sup>144</sup> As her letters to them show: BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 162; TNA SP1/158, fol. 201.

## Chapter 4

### Rebel With a Cause: Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater, 1529-31 and 1536

This chapter considers the rebellious activities of Katherine Howard-ap Rhys-Daubeney, successively Lady Rhys and Lady Daubeney, on two occasions: in Wales 1529-31, and in the north during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536.

Katherine was the second daughter of Thomas Howard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and his second wife Agnes Tylney.<sup>1</sup> She had married the prominent Welshman Rhys ap Griffith – grandson of Henry VII’s ally Sir Rhys ap Thomas – sometime in the early 1520s.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the decade, she became involved in inciting and directing local rebellion against the King’s justiciar Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers. This lawlessness contributed to her husband’s execution for treason in December 1531. Following her swift remarriage to, and subsequent divorce from, Henry Daubeney, later Earl of Bridgwater, in March 1536, there is evidence to suggest that Katherine became involved on the side of the rebels during the early stages of the Pilgrimage of Grace later that year. On both occasions, she escaped without any official consequences.

This chapter adds a new dimension to our understanding of the importance of kinship ties in the consequences for female rebellion.<sup>3</sup> Here it is argued that although the Howard connection helped Katherine to avoid penalties for sedition, those same kinship ties speedily manoeuvred her into an unwanted second marriage as a form of control over her wayward behaviour. This in turn

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup> See Jansen, Ch. 1, pp. 5-37. Margaret Cheyne is the only noblewoman known to have lost her life for her involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace; Jansen suggests that this was because her influential family connections did not move to help her, but to condemn her.

may have contributed to her involvement with the rebel Pilgrims in 1536. These episodes therefore provide a unique insight into the potentially cooperative relationship between aristocratic families and the state regarding rebellious noblewomen during this period. It also shows how such women could find themselves acting against both of these authorities, being simultaneously visible and invisible within the public sphere. This adds to our understanding of women's political role, and the way that the aristocratic family functioned in politics.

Katherine's Welsh rebellion of 1529-31 has attracted some scholarly attention, particularly from historians of early modern Wales, because it culminated in the extinction of an important Welsh dynasty through the execution of Katherine's husband, Rhys ap Griffith, for treason in 1531. Katherine's role in these events, however, has never formed the focus of any study and while historians agree that she was involved, their interpretations of her actions have differed. Glanmor Williams and William Llewellyn Williams described her as 'imperious' and 'ambitious, if not turbulent', and emphasised her influence over her husband, whereas David Jones and Ralph Griffiths saw her as a devoted wife following her husband's lead.<sup>4</sup> Likewise though her probable role in the Pilgrimage of Grace has been noted by Ruth and Madeleine Dodds and Sharon Jansen, it is not mentioned by prominent historians of this revolt such as Christopher Haigh or Michael Bush, and has never been fully investigated.<sup>5</sup> By placing Katherine centre-stage, this chapter will uncover the

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<sup>4</sup> See Jones, 'Sir Rhys ap Thomas', pp. 81-101 and 192-214; Llewellyn Williams, pp. 1-94; Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 66-119; Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, pp. 248-57.

<sup>5</sup> Madeleine Hope Dodds and Ruth Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, 2 vols (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971), I, pp. 287-8; Jansen, p. 25. Studies which do not mention Katherine include C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor*

nature and extent of her rebellious activities during Henry's reign, thus adding a significant episode to the existing Howard narrative.

Katherine appears to have been the only one of our five Howard women to be involved in seditious activity. This was typical of the time, as the work of a number of scholars of early modern Europe has demonstrated. While Arlette Farge, Rudolf Dekker and others have shown that some women in early modern Europe did incite, support, and participate in rebellious activity, their work makes clear that it was generally lower class women who did so during food or taxation riots, and not aristocratic women.<sup>6</sup> There were, however, some exceptions, and the participation of European noblewomen has been considered in reference to some specific wars or rebellions, such as the seventeenth-century English Civil War and the Spanish Revolt of the Comuneros in the 1520s.<sup>7</sup> However, though it has been noted by Dodds and Jansen that some aristocratic women did participate in sixteenth-century English rebellions such as the Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-7 or the Northern Rising of 1569, there has been no systematic study of their actions.<sup>8</sup> Broader work on early modern aristocratic

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*Lancashire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); S. J. Gunn, 'Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Revolt of 1536', *Past and Present* 123 (1989), 52-79; Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Richard W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> On England, see Bernard Capp, 'Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England', in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* ed. by Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 117-145; R. Houlbrooke, 'Women's Social Life and Common Action in England from the Fifteenth Century to the Eve of the Civil War', *Continuity and Change* 1 (1986), 176-86. On Ireland, see William Palmer, 'Gender, Violence, and Rebellion in Tudor and Early Stuart Ireland', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23:4 (1992), 699-712. On France, see Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women on Top', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 124-51 and Farge, 'Protesters Plain to See', in *A History of Women in the West*, III, ed. by Davis and Farge, pp. 489-505. On Holland, see Rudolf Dekker, 'Women in Revolt: Popular Protest and Its Social Basis in Holland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Theory and Society* 16 (1987), 337-62.

<sup>7</sup> Katherine A. Walker, 'The Military Activities of Charlotte de la Tremouille, Countess of Derby, during the Civil War and Interregnum', *Northern History* 38:1 (2001), 47-64; David Weigall, 'Women Militants in the English Civil War', *History Today* 22:6 (1972), 434-38.

<sup>8</sup> Dodds and Dodds, I, pp. 24-6, 79, 287-8; Jansen, pp. 24-37.

women, such as Barbara Harris' seminal study of English noblewomen, further suggests that though such women did undertake disorderly activity, in most cases it was not directed at the Crown, but at other nobles, often as part of feuds relating to ownership of land.<sup>9</sup> From the outset, then, Katherine's actions appear to place her among a select minority of sixteenth-century English noblewomen.

Studies of women involved in all kinds of riot and rebellion across early modern Europe have identified some 'norms' for female rebellion. In military rebellion, women were generally to be found inciting and organising behind the scenes rather than operating on the frontline, because as a rule, women did not bear arms.<sup>10</sup> They were also rarely punished for their actions. As Natalie Zemon Davis has shown, women's lack of individual legal identity in most European countries meant they were not seen as legally responsible for their own actions.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, women were popularly understood as disorderly creatures who simply could not help their rebellious behaviour, and thus their conduct was often ignored.<sup>12</sup> Katherine was not obviously punished for her actions; was this purely because of her gender, or were there more complex reasons?

### **Wales, 1529-31**

Let us begin with Katherine's first seditious activities in Wales during the later 1520s. Katherine's life in Wales probably began in 1522, which is when the marriage was permitted to take place according to the contract made between the

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<sup>9</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 207-8.

<sup>10</sup> Jansen, pp. 29-30; see also Cristian Berco, 'Juana Pimentel, the Mendoza Family, and the Crown', in *Power and Gender in Renaissance Spain*, ed. by Nader, pp. 27-47; Pierce, pp. 57-9.

<sup>11</sup> Davis, pp. 176-7. See also Dekker, pp. 344-5.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, pp. 176-7.

couples' families in 1514.<sup>13</sup> Rhys was the grandson of Sir Rhys ap Thomas - who had fought with Henry VII at Bosworth - and the son of the late Sir Griffith Rhys, who had been prominent in the household of Prince Arthur but died prematurely in 1521.<sup>14</sup> Within five years of their marriage, both Katherine's father Thomas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Rhys' grandfather Sir Rhys ap Thomas had died, leaving the young couple to carve out their own path in south-west Wales.<sup>15</sup>

Rhys' grandfather had been Chamberlain and Chief Justice of South Wales, and it is likely that both families expected young Rhys to inherit these offices. In May 1526, however, Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, a man described by Glanmor Williams as 'self-seeking, brash, and prone to giving offence', was officially appointed as both Chamberlain and Chief Justice, and as steward and councillor of Princess Mary's household at Ludlow.<sup>16</sup> Not only was Rhys deprived of what he considered to be his birthright; he was also excluded from the body intended to govern Wales. A venomous rivalry sprang up between them, fuelled by Rhys' apparent popularity and the people's dislike of Ferrers. The Welsh chronicler Elis Gruffydd claimed that 'when Rhys went to Wales, the whole country turned out to welcome him, and this made Lord Ferrers envious and jealous'.<sup>17</sup> Historians have tended to assume that Katherine was responsible for encouraging this rivalry, in light of her later actions in support of her husband.<sup>18</sup> However, there is no evidence to suggest that Katherine took any

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<sup>13</sup> The contract stated that Rhys must reach the age of 14 before the marriage occurred. This would be in 1522 based on a birthdate of 1508; see Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> R. A. Griffiths, 'Sir Gruffudd ap Rhys (1479-1521)', in 'Rice family (per. C. 1500-1621), gentry', *ODNB* [accessed 5 January 2013].

<sup>15</sup> Norfolk in May 1524 and ap Thomas in 1525.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, p. 254; *LP* IV, 2200.

<sup>17</sup> Elis Gruffydd, quoted in Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, p. 253; Llewelyn Williams, p. 8.



independent action against Ferrers, or encouraged her husband to do so, at this early stage.<sup>19</sup> It is generally agreed that Rhys was reckless – Griffiths describes him as ‘headstrong and quarrelsome’, Williams as ‘rash’ – and perfectly capable of reacting adversely to Lord Ferrers’ supremacy without encouragement from his wife.<sup>20</sup> Katherine appears to have been nothing more than a supporter of her husband at this point.

Some of the late Sir Rhys ap Thomas’ servants, understanding that his heir’s power was now limited and that the future would rest with Ferrers, had changed their allegiance in 1525. The rivalry between the two nobles is clearly illustrated by the way that Rhys furiously initiated legal action against these men, claiming that they had embezzled money and goods from his late grandfather, and attempting to have the matter tried in Chancery in order to avoid the local sessions over which Ferrers presided.<sup>21</sup> Though John Veysey, Bishop of Exeter and President of Princess Mary’s Council, wrote to Cardinal Wolsey in July 1528 saying that ‘the mattre betwixt my lord fferrers & young M Risse [is] well pacifyd’, he was proved wrong when Rhys wrote in 1529 that Ferrers’ men were continually quarrelling with his own ‘pouer tenn[an]ts and servants’.<sup>22</sup> He stated that several of his household were kept ‘under apparence from conntie to conntie’ for no good reason.<sup>23</sup> In light of this he asked to be made Ferrers’ official deputy in order to ‘haue my pouer tennts and servants with other my

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<sup>19</sup> Griffiths has stated in his introduction to *The Household Book of Sir Edward Don: An Anglo-Welsh Knight and his Circle*, ed. by Griffiths, *Buckinghamshire Record Society* 33 (2004) that Katherine sent a letter to Don in 1525 ‘presumably to express...displeasure at the advancement of Lord Ferrers in South Wales and to seek Sir Edward’s assistance at court.’ (p. xlv). However, the book itself shows that this letter was sent in January 1524, before Ferrers had been appointed (p. 106) and must therefore have referred to something else.

<sup>20</sup> Griffiths, ‘Rice Family (*per. c.* 1500-1651), gentry’, *ODNB* [accessed 2 January 2013]; Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, p. 248.

<sup>21</sup> TNA C1/513/26; BL Cotton MS Vitellius C I, fol. 48.

<sup>22</sup> TNA SP1/53, fol. 71; TNA SP1/49, fol. 78.

<sup>23</sup> TNA SP1/53, fol. 71.

fryndes in quiet'.<sup>24</sup> It has been argued by Llewellyn Williams that this might have solved much of the problem in the region; Rhys' popularity might have softened the transition to royal government and would have eased the friction between himself and Ferrers.<sup>25</sup> However, the request appears to have been refused, since there is no patent to show that it was ever enacted, and in June 1529 matters came to a head at the Carmarthen assize courts. Katherine had accompanied her husband to Carmarthen, and a contemporary letter from her to Wolsey, two letters from Ferrers, also to Wolsey, and the indictment against Rhys, written several months later, all describe what occurred.<sup>26</sup> Ferrers, of course, was describing events firsthand. Though his letters show that Katherine was in Carmarthen, it is not clear that she was a direct witness to everything that occurred, and we must take this into account when we consider her narrative.

According to all the sources, both men claimed the same lodgings for their retinues on arrival in Carmarthen on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June. Rhys' servants had 'set up his armes upon certeyn lodges dores' which, according to Katherine, belonged to his own tenants, but when Ferrers arrived on the scene he tore them down, because the Mayor had said he could have those houses. He thought that Rhys had claimed them simply 'to thentent that none of the said Justices servants shuld be lodged there'.<sup>27</sup> It is plausible that Katherine was an eyewitness to this, as she was able to describe it in detail. She added that 'the contre was not content' with Ferrers' actions.<sup>28</sup> The argument sparked resentment on both sides, and made the populace angry at the perceived insult to Rhys, who then had 'great

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<sup>24</sup> TNA SP1/53, fol. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Llewellyn Williams, pp. 8-11.

<sup>26</sup> TNA SP1/54 fols. 87, 85, 93; Indictment printed in Jones, 'Sir Rhys ap Thomas', pp. 81-101 and 192-214, original TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>27</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87; TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>28</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

labor' to restore peace.<sup>29</sup> It seems that the people of the region still considered Rhys, and not Ferrers, as their liege lord.

There appears to have been no outright violence on this occasion, but the contretemps set the tone for the rest of the assizes. The indictment states that on that same evening, Rhys 'p[ri]veuelye causyd his frynds and adherents to be warnyd as well in the countie of Kerm'dyn as in the Lshp. Of Kidwelly who in ryettous man'r well wepuny'd assymblyd them thesame nyght to a great nombre and came towards Kerm'dyn entending to have morderyd and destroyed the said justice and his servants'.<sup>30</sup> A day later, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June, he sent out another call of arms to his adherents across the southwest of the country, allegedly bidding them come to Carmarthen 'well appoynted and wepened' the next day in order to murder Ferrers.<sup>31</sup> The indictment and Ferrers' contemporary letter state that roughly a week later - Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June - Rhys and 'ffortye and more' servants broke into Carmarthen Castle and into the privy chamber, where Ferrers was entertaining local dignitaries.<sup>32</sup> Rhys began a quarrel over his kinsmen Thomas ap Owen, who was imprisoned in the castle and was, according to Ferrers, 'a mysruled person'.<sup>33</sup> In the heat of the quarrel, somebody drew a dagger; Ferrers claimed that it was Rhys after 'many opprobrious words', but Katherine states that it was Ferrers, and that Rhys only drew his in self-defence and was hurt in the arm for his pains.<sup>34</sup> At this distance it is impossible to unravel these events with certainty, but the end result was that Lord Ferrers imprisoned Rhys inside

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<sup>29</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

<sup>30</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; TNA SP1/54, fol. 85.

<sup>32</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234; TNA SP1/54, fol. 85.

<sup>33</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>34</sup> TNA SP1/54, fols. 85 and 87. The indictment further claimed that Rhys had drawn his dagger first and that Ferrers was saved from his assault by his own servant Lewis Thomas ap John, who took the dagger from Rhys and was 'sore hurt and wounded w't' in his right hand' in the process; see TNA STAC2/18/234.

the castle, with which act, according to Katherine, ‘the co[n]tre is not co[n]tentid’.<sup>35</sup> It must be noted that although Katherine described these events in great detail, she was probably not an eyewitness as it is unlikely that she would have accompanied Rhys and his armed servants into the castle for a potentially violent confrontation. She may have received her information from one of Rhys’ retinue shortly after the event.

The next day, Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June, Ferrers sent his chaplain to Wolsey with his account of the affray.<sup>36</sup> The indictment suggests that on this same day, Rhys and Katherine sent out proclamations across most of south-west Wales - ‘to all partyes of the counties of Kerm[ar]dyn Cardygan and Pembrok and to all other lordships from Bilth to Saint Davys wh[ich] is nere an hundred myles’ - summoning Rhys’ adherents to Carmarthen in order to storm the castle and rescue him.<sup>37</sup> According to Ferrers, this rescue attempt took place the next day on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> ‘at the comanndymet of Rece griffith and my lady haward’.<sup>38</sup> One hundred and twenty ‘Capytayns and Ryngleders’ were later indicted along with Rhys and Ferrers wrote that ‘for a troth ther was not such insurrecion in walys at any tyme a man can remebre’.<sup>39</sup> This same day, Katherine sent her own letter to Wolsey.<sup>40</sup> On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June Ferrers wrote again to inform him that the previous day’s rebellion had been dealt with.<sup>41</sup>

The attempt did not work: the rebels were arrested and indicted, and Rhys remained in the castle probably until early July.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, it is abundantly

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<sup>35</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 85.

<sup>37</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>38</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 93.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 93.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 87.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 93.

<sup>42</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234. By 10 July Rhys was free and busy arresting pirates: TNA SP1/54 fol. 233.

clear that something approaching a rebellion did take place and that its aim was to rescue Rhys. What is not clear is the scale of this revolt, and the role that Katherine played in it. This is partly because the dates given by the official indictment, written several months later in September 1529, were not correct. It claimed that Rhys had broken into the castle on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, and that the ‘great insurrection’ organised by him and Katherine took place only *one* day later on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June. This short timescale left no leisure for those concerned to have organised a rebellion, let alone drawn in supporters from across the country as the indictment claims, and this has led some historians to see these events as a popular, spur-of-the-moment riot among those who were already in town for the assizes, with no visible organisation and of no great size.<sup>43</sup>

However, these dates were not correct. A calendar for June 1529 and the contemporary letters by those involved show that Rhys’ castle break-in happened on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>, and the rebellion not until the night of Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>, lengthening the timescale somewhat.<sup>44</sup> It still seems unlikely that there were participants who had come from one hundred miles away, and it has been argued that Ferrers exaggerated the extent of this.<sup>45</sup> However, the indictment further states that Rhys had already sent out such a call to arms over a week earlier on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>46</sup> This would have allowed his more distant adherents to reach Carmarthen by Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>. Moreover, the one hundred and twenty men indicted were described as the ‘ryngleders’, which suggests that there was a much larger force under their command.<sup>47</sup> It is clear that, as Griffiths has argued,

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<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, p. 255; Llewellyn Williams, p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> TNA SP1/54, fols. 85, 87, 93.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, ‘Sir Rhys ap Thomas’, p. 196; Llewellyn Williams, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*.

Llewellyn Williams' dismissal of this rebellion as 'an unpremeditated riot' does not hold.<sup>48</sup> This was an organised revolt. But what was Katherine's role?

Ferrers consistently blamed her for inciting rebellion alongside her husband and the chronology of events suggests that this was indeed correct.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, though Ferrers claimed that the second proclamation between 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of June was sent by both Rhys and Katherine, we know that Rhys had been imprisoned by this time and, according to Katherine, was kept 'w<sup>th</sup>out no plac to wrytt'; the fact that she, not he, wrote to Wolsey suggests that this was true.<sup>50</sup> It also means Rhys was probably not the author of this second call to arms, and that Katherine was inciting rebellion on his behalf.

Katherine, then, tried to raise the country and rescue her husband. It is true that she may simply have been carrying out plans already laid by him, and may have been pushed into such action by an angry populace. However, we must remember that Ferrers consistently referred to Katherine not simply as Rhys' wife, but used her maiden name of Howard to emphasise his understanding of her as a separate and influential individual.<sup>51</sup> Her signature would have been on the proclamations sent out across the region. She was sufficiently involved with her husband, his retinue, and his plans to make the effort to discover what had happened between him and Ferrers in Carmarthen Castle before his imprisonment. She was aware of the conditions in which he was imprisoned. This was not passive acquiescence to a rebellion organised in her name. Naturally she did not physically lead the rebels - the indictment would surely

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<sup>48</sup> Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 97.

<sup>49</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 93: '...the greate rebell and insurreccion of the peple in thys partes at the comandymet of Rece griffith and my lady haward'; TNA STAC2/18/234: 'The said Rice Gruffith and the lady Katherine Haward his wiff...sent their messengers and servants by nyght and daye to all partyes'.

<sup>50</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 93; TNA STAC2/18/234.

have mentioned it - but we should not expect her to have done. As noted earlier, women did not bear arms, and thus their role in violent rebellion was invariably restricted to inciting, raising troops, and organising. The evidence shows that Katherine did all of these. Her role in these events was clearly greater than has hitherto been appreciated.

Her petition to Wolsey cements this impression. Her letter is dated 17<sup>th</sup> June, a Thursday, the same day as the rescue attempt at the castle and two days after Rhys had been imprisoned there by Ferrers.<sup>52</sup> It is this time delay that appears to confirm the nature of her role. The letter claimed to be her primary response to her husband's imprisonment and her only attempt to secure his freedom – but why was it written, not immediately Rhys was taken into ward nor even the next day, but two days later? It cannot have taken her that long to discover what had happened; Katherine was staying within the city where the fracas took place. Instead, in those intervening days, she sent out proclamations across the country to raise a revolt and rescue Rhys in her own way without reference to anybody of greater authority. Clearly the petition to Wolsey was not her first reaction. Yet the fact that she wrote it on the day of the revolt – and presumably before the rescue attempt itself had taken place, since the indictment tells us that it was tried that night – shows that she was not sure that the revolt would succeed. This shows that she fully understood the risk she was taking and that she used her petition as a safeguard against any possible consequences.

A closer examination of the style and substance of her letter sheds further light on her role. Written in her own hand, her scrawl and disordered chronology prove her own plea to Wolsey to 'pardon me of my rewde wrytung for hit is in

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<sup>52</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

hast'.<sup>53</sup> Thorne and Daybell have shown that it was conventional for noblewomen to write petitions for their husbands' freedom themselves, rather than using a secretary, as it was considered to add a personal touch.<sup>54</sup> Rather than spending the obligatory few lines in salutation, she leaps straight into her suit. Her letter continues in this frenzied pattern and does not follow a clear petitionary structure. Unusually, there is little humility or self-deprecation, no apologies for bothering the recipient, and no emphasis on Katherine's position as a helpless female, all of which were common for noblewomen.<sup>55</sup> Katherine told of the argument over lodgings, why Rhys had entered the castle, and what happened there. She claimed that he was now imprisoned 'w<sup>t</sup>out any cause resonable' and emphasised his powerlessness, stating that he would have written himself, but that he was 'so kepte that he [is] w<sup>th</sup>out no plac to wrytt'.<sup>56</sup> This might suggest an added dimension to her letter. By writing in Rhys's place, she was taking on his role as the man of the family, which allowed her to transcend the boundaries of female epistolary convention. This may explain why she did not use the common trope of female weakness and she did not accentuate her own distress as Jane, duchess of Northumberland, was to do in similar circumstances in 1553.<sup>57</sup> Instead, she addressed Wolsey man-to-man, criticising Ferrers' conduct and discussing the disturbed state of the country. Katherine did not, therefore, write herself wholly as a typical noblewoman seeking redress.

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<sup>53</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87. All further quotes refer to this source.

<sup>54</sup> Alison Thorne, 'Women's Petitionary Letters and Early Seventeenth-Century Treason Trials', *Women's Writing* 13 (2006), 21-37; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 108.

<sup>55</sup> Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, for example, famously excused her involvement in the Nun of Kent affair in 1536 on grounds of her 'fragylitee and brittelnes' as a mere woman; BL Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 94. See also Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 250-5; Magnusson, 'A Rhetoric of Requests', in *Women and Politics*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 51-66.

<sup>56</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

<sup>57</sup> S. J. Gunn, 'A Letter of Jane, Duchess of Northumberland, 1553', *EHR* 114 (1999), 1267-71; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 251.



Her understanding of current political allegiances and of the government's mistrust of the Rhys family was comprehensive. She made no mention of Rhys' family but instead identified herself clearly as a Howard and asked for assistance on those terms: 'my lord I beseke yo<sup>r</sup> grace to be graciuse lord unto my husband and me for the great loue that was betwene yo<sup>r</sup> lordship and my lord my father and that ye will not suffer us to haue no shame nor rebuke'. The Howards were the most powerful political connections she possessed, and the most likely to lever her husband out of prison. Here, Katherine was following convention in writing a letter of petition, but she was drawing on her own connections to secure success. Interestingly, she did not mention the current Duke of Norfolk, her half-brother, the nominal head of the dynasty, but her father, a dead man. In 1529, her brother the Duke was supporting his niece Anne Boleyn in supplanting the Queen in the King's affections, which was not an aim Wolsey shared and meant that he was unlikely to grant Katherine any favours for her brother's sake. Her father, on the other hand, may have evoked a more positive memory likely to encourage the Cardinal to assist her.

Her letter may have had the desired effect, as within two weeks Wolsey had ordered Rhys' release from Carmarthen castle.<sup>58</sup> He was called to the court of Star Chamber in November 1529. The chronicler Elis Gruffudd and Judge John Spelman both gave an account of the trial, stating that both Rhys and Ferrers were rebuked, especially Ferrers for his conduct in quarrelling with a man young enough to be his son. Both were ordered to pay large fines before

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<sup>58</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 233.

being released.<sup>59</sup> A year later in October 1530, Chapuys reported that Rhys had been imprisoned in the Tower because his wife – Katherine – had besieged the governor of Wales – Ferrers – in his castle, and Rhys had threatened to finish what she had begun.<sup>60</sup> This extraordinary statement may be an exaggeration; ambassadors would often grasp at gossip simply to have something to report. However, at the same time on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1530, Rhys' uncle James ap Howell was arrested for 'fortifying' himself in Emlyn Castle, which belonged to Rhys, making it clear that something did occur.<sup>61</sup> Even if Chapuys was exaggerating the extent of her involvement, it speaks volumes that this rumour was circulating at court, and that it was thought plausible. Once again it shows Katherine inciting, organising and directing active rebellion.

Chapuys' reports tell us that Rhys was released from the Tower in June 1531 due to ill-health, but was taken back into custody in September on charges of conspiracy.<sup>62</sup> He was said to have conspired with Scotland to topple Henry VIII from his throne in favour of James IV. He was also accused of using his servant Edward Floyd to carry messages to his uncle James, urging him to join in this conspiracy. Chapuys believed it to be the other way around, reporting that Rhys refused to confess that his own servant had tried to persuade him into such a conspiracy, and though he had not done anything wrong himself, was executed for his refusal to implicate anybody else: 'although the said Ris had not accepted the offers made to him, nor entered into the conspiracy yet, as he would not confess who it was who solicited him, he was condemned to death,

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<sup>59</sup> Gruffydd in Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 98-9; *Spelman's Reports*, I, pp. 47-8.

<sup>60</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 460.

<sup>61</sup> *LP IV*, 6709 (7).

<sup>62</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 796.

notwithstanding the many apologies he made'.<sup>63</sup> Even Chapuys seemed to be aware that this was merely a charge of expediency. No action had been taken to enact any such conspiracy, and as Griffiths has noted, his execution was 'judicial murder'.<sup>64</sup> He was executed on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1531 on trumped-up charges of high treason in what amounted to a show trial.

It is clear that Rhys had not been executed for anything he had actually done, but for what the government was afraid he might do. South west Wales at this moment was in a state of discontent over religious reform and the abuses of royal officers and was ripe for rebellion.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Chapuys reported that 'there is a rumour about town that had it not been for the Lady [Anne Boleyn], who hated him [Rhys] because he and his wife had spoken disparagingly of her, he would have been pardoned and escaped his miserable fate'.<sup>66</sup> If this was true, it speaks volumes for the level of Anne Boleyn's influence at this stage. Even if this was not the whole truth, it was enough that Rhys, a man who had spoken out against the new regime, had control of south west Wales, a tried and tested invasion route. It is no wonder that this made King and council uneasy. It could be argued that Katherine was partially responsible for the state's extreme reaction to her husband. As we have seen, letters from Ferrers and rumours in London claim that she was the one who had canvassed local opinion in favour of her husband. She allegedly summoned his followers to a violent rescue, and she then tried to continue matters while Rhys was in prison. Such surges of violent unrest proved that she and Rhys were not safe hands.

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<sup>63</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 853.

<sup>64</sup> Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 110.

<sup>65</sup> Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation, and Reformation*, p. 254-6; J. Gwynfor Jones, *Early modern Wales, c.1525-1640* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. xxiii.

<sup>66</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV, (ii), 853.

Were her actions unusual? We have seen that it was certainly not the norm for noblewomen like Katherine to incite and organise violent revolt. There were, however, a few other noblewomen in sixteenth-century England who did so. Jansen has shown that during the Pilgrimage of Grace women such as Catherine Spencer-Percy, dowager Countess of Northumberland, Anne Lady Hussey, Lady Elizabeth Stapleton and Lady Evers incited and encouraged rebellion.<sup>67</sup> During the Northern Rebellion of 1569, too, noblewomen were involved; Jane Howard-Neville, Countess of Westmoreland – another Howard woman – had spurred the men on when they looked to give up the idea, and Anne Somerset-Percy, Countess of Northumberland, allegedly rode up and down the lines of rebel troops to encourage them, despite being heavily pregnant.<sup>68</sup> It is difficult, however, to find noblewomen participating in smaller-scale revolts against the Crown as most such activities were part of feuds between nobles.<sup>69</sup>

Katherine's actions therefore remain unusual even in the context of other disorderly noblewomen. I have found no other example of an English noblewoman involved in her own small-scale revolt against representatives of the Crown during this period. But were her actions really perceived as rebellion against the Crown? Her quarrel was with one man, Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, and in this sense was little different from other feuds between nobles. There is a sense from Katherine's 1529 letter to Wolsey that, like the Pilgrims of

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<sup>67</sup> Jansen, pp. 24-37.

<sup>68</sup> Roger N. McDermott, 'Charles Neville, sixth earl of Westmorland (1542/3-1601), *magnate and rebel*', *ODNB* [accessed 7 January 2013]; Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch (eds.), *Tudor Rebellions*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), p. 111.

<sup>69</sup> Examples include Margaret, Countess of Shrewsbury, who imprisoned members of the Berkeley family and participating in the siege of Berkeley castle in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and Anne, Lady Berkeley, who ordered her servants to steal fish from a manor she was trying to repossess in 1534. See Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 207-8; James Herbert Cooke, 'The Great Berkeley Lawsuit of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries. A Chapter of Gloucestershire History', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 3 (1878-9), 305-24 (pp. 305-15).

Grace in 1536, she felt that the King was not aware of the wrongs being done in his name.<sup>70</sup> She referred to one of Ferrers' prisoners as 'servant unto the kings honorable grace', suggesting that Ferrers was himself acting against the Crown by imprisoning the King's men.<sup>71</sup> However, all the sources make it clear that Ferrers was in Wales as the King's representative. Katherine would undoubtedly have known that any action taken against him would have been construed as rebellion against the Crown. Ferrers certainly understood his own actions in this way, stating that he had taken Rhys into ward 'in the kings name'.<sup>72</sup> Kesselring has noted that categorisation of an action – i.e. whether it was riot or rebellion, felony, or treason, against the Crown or not – lay with the Crown's officials and not with participants.<sup>73</sup> Ferrers' indictment does contain the request that Rhys be convicted of treason for trying to kill the King's justice. His execution on a charge of treason does suggest that his actions – and thus Katherine's – were understood in this way.<sup>74</sup> That his charge concerned a conspiracy to place James V of Scotland on the throne of England, and not his attempts to kill Ferrers, does not detract from this. In 1531, Rhys could not legally have been convicted of treason for his attempt on Ferrers' life and historians agree that the conspiracy charge was a convenient cover for his actual deeds.<sup>75</sup>

Katherine herself suffered no official recognition of her actions. She was not investigated, brought before the council or any court of law, forced into exile,

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<sup>70</sup> See Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 51.

<sup>71</sup> TNA SP1/54, fol. 87.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 85.

<sup>73</sup> K. J. Kesselring, 'Deference and Dissent in Tudor England: Reflections on Sixteenth-Century Protest', *History Compass* 3 (2005), 1-16 (p. 7).

<sup>74</sup> TNA STAC2/18/234.

<sup>75</sup> Treason law at this time rested on a statute from 1352. Though killing an officer of the King was treasonous, attempting but failing to do so was not. See G. R. Elton, 'The Law of Treason in the Early Reformation', *Historical Journal* 11 (1968), 211-236; John Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason: An Introduction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 9-23. For more on this, see Chapter 6.

imprisoned, attainted, or executed. At this time, this was not unusual. In 1530, England had yet to see noblewomen involved in violent revolt on a serious scale. Noblewomen involved in the 1569 rebellion in the north would not enjoy such leniency. Anne, Countess of Northumberland was forced into exile and Jane, Countess of Westmorland, lived out her life under house arrest.<sup>76</sup> As Katherine's husband, Rhys was officially responsible for her actions. This may have been the reason why he was imprisoned and she was left alone. It is clear that he, and not she, was considered by the state to be the dangerous influence in the region; having disposed of Rhys, the government apparently ceased to concern itself with Katherine.

We must also remember that she had influential family connections to help her. She was the daughter of the late Duke of Norfolk, sister of the current duke, and the half-aunt of Anne Boleyn. Though we cannot prove it, it is likely that these exalted connections were mobilised on her behalf. Unfortunately, the evidence does not tell us Katherine's whereabouts directly after her husband's execution. Henry Rice, a seventeenth-century descendent of the family who sought to restore Rhys ap Griffith's reputation, claimed that she went to London with her children in order to discover what had really occurred.<sup>77</sup> No evidence survives to show whether this is true or not though we know that she had left Wales by March 1532, when she sent her chaplain to Carew Castle to recover some of her possessions.<sup>78</sup> Her three children, as minor heirs, should have become Crown wards. Griffiths notes that the two boys, Thomas and Griffith,

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<sup>76</sup> Julian Lock, 'Thomas Percy, seventh earl of Northumberland (1528-1572), *magnate and rebel*', *ODNB* [accessed 7 January 2013]; McDermott, 'Charles Neville, sixth earl of Westmorland', *ODNB* [accessed 7 January 2013].

<sup>77</sup> Henry Rice, 'Objections against Rice Griffith in his Indictment, with the Answers thereunto', *Cambrian Register* 2 (1796), 270-77.

<sup>78</sup> TNA SP1/53, fol. 129.

became wards of Cuthbert Tunstall, the Bishop of Durham, but we do not know what happened to Katherine's daughter Agnes.<sup>79</sup>

The next we hear of Katherine is a letter from her to Cromwell in 1535 which shows that she had married Henry, Lord Daubeney.<sup>80</sup> This probably happened quite soon after she was widowed at the end of 1531, because a letter from Daubeney to Cromwell shows that in 1535 the couple were arranging a divorce, suggesting that they had been married long enough to reach such dire straits.<sup>81</sup> It seems highly probable that this marriage was arranged by Katherine's family, perhaps with the connivance of the government, as a safeguard against any future wild behaviour. It is true that at first glance, it looks like a good match. Henry was the son of Giles Daubeney, Henry VII's administrator and confidante, and was allegedly brought up alongside Henry VIII.<sup>82</sup> His Somerset connections would have been useful to the Howards, and his court pedigree was impeccable. But Daubeney was never of much consequence at court. He had lost his fortune by participating in the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and then sold vast swathes of his lands to Edward Seymour and various others. By 1532, his responsibilities were minor, his estate mediocre and his finances ruinous.<sup>83</sup> Not such a good match after all, and certainly not up to the Howards' usual standards.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that although her family may have engineered Katherine's escape from official reprisals for her rebellious behaviour, they were keen to ensure her future invisibility in public affairs.

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<sup>79</sup> Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 117.

<sup>80</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 120.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 118.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Heskith Daubeney et al., *The History of the Daubeney Family* (n.p.: Daubeney family, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix F.

Could the King, or his advisors, have pushed the Howards into accepting this sub-standard match for Katherine? It is possible; in theory the King did have jurisdiction over aristocratic widows' remarriages and there were times when he tried to execute this, such as for Anne Savage, the widowed Lady Berkeley, in 1537.<sup>85</sup> However, there is no evidence that he attempted to do this for Katherine. This does not rule out the idea that the match was made with the underhand connivance of the King, but it suggests that the Howards were the driving force behind it.

The reason for this probably lies in the family's political situation in the early 1530s. At the time of Rhys' execution in December 1531, Anne Boleyn, a member of the extended Howard family, was effectively Queen-in-waiting. Though not yet married to Henry VIII, she had usurped his wife Catherine of Aragon's place in all but name. The Queen had been sent to a separate residence in July of this year and was never to live with Henry again.<sup>86</sup> Though earlier in 1531 it had been rumoured that relations between Anne and her uncle, Katherine's half-brother the Duke of Norfolk, were not good, Norfolk continued to work assiduously to enact the royal divorce and enable the King to marry his niece.<sup>87</sup> This placed the Howard family centre-stage. Norfolk spent much of his time at court, and Katherine's younger brother Lord William Howard was entrusted with an embassy to Scotland during 1531.<sup>88</sup> The whereabouts of her mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, between 1529 and 1533 is not known, but Katherine's half-niece, Norfolk's daughter Mary, made her debut at

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<sup>85</sup> See Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 160-2.

<sup>86</sup> Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, p. 147.

<sup>87</sup> *LP V*, 216; Head, pp. 106-9.

<sup>88</sup> James McDermott, 'William Howard, first Baron Howard of Effingham (c. 1510-1573), *naval commander*', *ODNB* [accessed 16 January 2013].



court among Anne Boleyn's maids of honour.<sup>89</sup> Not all the members of the family were as focused on the dynasty's goal of attaining the throne. Katherine's half-brother Lord Edmund Howard was then controller of Calais, but was proving an embarrassment to the family with his heavy debts and constant demands for money. A letter from him to Cromwell in February 1532 states that none of his kin would help him.<sup>90</sup> The family's position was further endangered by Norfolk's wife Elizabeth, who was banished from court in May 1531 for supporting the Queen too openly.<sup>91</sup>

Katherine's rebellion cannot have been viewed with enthusiasm by Norfolk, his niece, and other Howards, coming as it did on top of existing indiscretions which might make Henry VIII doubt the family's loyalty. Therefore, they were clearly not prepared to leave her as a rich, powerful, popular, and visible widow in rebellious Wales. It is illuminating that they thought that the best way to control Katherine's behaviour was to remarry her. Perhaps her half-brother, the Duke of Norfolk, did not feel that he was able to exert sufficient control over Katherine himself.

It is not clear when or how Daubeney himself was chosen but it is possible that locality played a part. Katherine's mother-in-law, Catherine St John-ap Rhys-Edgecombe, had remarried in 1525 to Sir Piers Edgecombe, and one of Rhys' sisters had married a member of the Luttrell family, both of whom were based in the West alongside Daubeney. It is possible that they played a part in suggesting this match. Daubeney's Somerset location was a useful asset as it was far away from court. He did not hold any court offices and is rarely mentioned in court gossip, suggesting that he was unimportant in court circles,

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<sup>89</sup> BL Add. MS 6113, fol. 70.

<sup>90</sup> TNA SP1/69, fols. 85-6.

<sup>91</sup> *LP* V, 238.

which would in theory limit Katherine's own influence. As Katherine does not appear in any court records from 1531 until 1534, or at any court events until the funeral of Jane Seymour in 1537, clearly this isolation was effective.<sup>92</sup> Daubeney reliably took the correct side throughout the upsets of Henry's reign, never once hauled up for sedition, religious nonconformity, or objection to the royal divorce. As Katherine's husband, he was supposed to make sure that she too behaved herself, and he appears to have succeeded admirably. As a method of control, it was masterly. For Katherine, it was probably deeply unpleasant. Daubeney does not seem to have been a agreeable man. During the 1540s one of his servants claimed in a Chancery suit that his lord had shot at him with a crossbow, and the London agent of the Lisle family, carrying on a lengthy litigation against him, so disliked him that he wished he might die childless, 'as I trust he shall do, and that shortly'.<sup>93</sup> Katherine's happiness was evidently not the chief concern of either her family or the state.

Katherine's Welsh rebellion is important in a number of ways. Firstly, it shows that noblewomen could and did involve themselves in rebellion, and that contemporaries had no difficulty in believing them capable of this. Katherine's actions place her firmly in a public and visible role. Officially, however, she remained invisible by virtue of her status as a woman and a wife. Both this and her connections to the powerful Howard dynasty helped her to escape any state recognition, usually a desirable state of invisibility since few people seek out execution. This case, however, also demonstrates the disadvantages of such close kinship ties. Katherine's close identification with her Howard relations meant that she apparently had no way to rebel against her family's decision to marry her

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<sup>92</sup> *LP* XII (ii), 1060 (p. 374).

<sup>93</sup> TNA SP3/12, fol. 15; TNA C1/1137/44.

to Daubeney, and it is clear that the Howards were deliberately consigning Katherine back into the sphere of invisibility for their own protection. This might demonstrate a kind of understanding between the state and England's most powerful aristocratic dynasties regarding the behaviour and control of women. The state had no need to act officially in cases like Katherine's if it knew that her family would do so. By the same means, a dynasty could avoid disgrace at the hands of its women and instead deal with them itself, perhaps more effectively than the government.

### **The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536**

Despite the unpleasant consequences, Wales 1529-31 was not Katherine's only foray into rebellion. After divorcing her second husband Henry Daubeney, Lord Daubeney in the spring of 1536, she appears to have become involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace in the autumn of that year. The evidence for this comes from a spy report made in November 1536 by a young soldier of the King's host named Harry Osberne.<sup>94</sup> Harry, who came from Gloucester, went north with his father as part of the host under Sir Charles á Trowen. He received permission to spend a few days among the rebel enemy in order to 'knowe the facyon off them'. On 29 November his report was written up probably by John Ingby, to whom Osberne reported verbally, and sent to the Privy Council. In it, Osberne stated that 'my lady Rysse ys come to them w<sup>t</sup> iij thowsande men and sche browth w<sup>t</sup> herre halffe a carte loode of plate the whyche plate they doo coine them selffe amonge them ther'. Historians have traditionally identified 'lady Rysse' as Katherine, for though this title was not technically correct for her by

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<sup>94</sup> TNA SP1/112, fol. 34. All further quotes from Osberne's report refer to this source.

this point, it does not appear to apply to any other noblewoman. This is significant indeed.<sup>95</sup>

The problem of identification, however, remains real and must be carefully assessed. Though Katherine was indeed the widow of Rhys ap Griffith, and thus 'Lady Rhys', by November 1536 she had been married to and divorced from Henry Lord Daubeney.<sup>96</sup> She was still referred to as 'Lady Daubeney' despite the divorce; the contemporary description of Jane Seymour's funeral in 1537, for example, calls her 'Lady Dawbeney', and the Lisles' agent John Husee noted in 1538 that 'Lady Dawbny' had acted as chief mourner at the funeral of Elizabeth Howard-Boleyn, Countess of Wiltshire.<sup>97</sup> 'Lady Daubeney' could not itself have referred to any other noblewoman, for the only other Daubeney women were Katherine's mother-in-law who had died in 1513 and her sister-in-law, who was married to the Earl of Bath. There is no indication that Katherine ever formally returned to her first married name of Rhys and there should have been no reason for anybody else to use this. Yet I have found no other noblewoman to whom the title could apply. The women of the Rhys family, Katherine's first marital family, were all accounted for elsewhere, either dead or under different names. There appears to be no other noblewoman bearing the name of Lady Rhys at this time who could have offered the rebels troops and plate, or had the necessary independence to make the journey north to deliver them. It seems, therefore, that 'Lady Rysse' must indeed have been meant for Katherine.

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<sup>95</sup> Dodds and Dodds, I, p. 288; Jansen, p. 25; J. S. Brewer, the calendarer of the relevant volume of *The Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* also indexed this letter under Katherine's name.

<sup>96</sup> In March 1536 George Rolle stated that the couple were about to be divorced (TNA SP3/9, fol. 36); a Chancery petition from the 1540s refers to them as 'devorcyd and seu'yd from bedde and borde' (TNA C1/777/16).

<sup>97</sup> *LP* XII (ii), 1060; TNA SP3/12, fol. 42.

Even if this was the case, the veracity of Osberne's report has been doubted. This is largely because he also stated that Henry, Lord Stafford, had also come to the rebels and offered them one thousand troops. As far as is known, Stafford did no such thing.<sup>98</sup> At no point did Osberne mention his geographical location or the precise date of his spying mission, which makes it difficult to track the events and characters he mentions. He himself does not appear in the historical record at any other point. However, the involvement of Lord Stafford was widely, if falsely, rumoured among the rebel force throughout the autumn of 1536 so it is not surprising that Osberne reported this.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, part of his brief was to gather the rumours then current in the enemy camp and pass them to his superiors; it was not his job to decide what was true and what was false. Katherine's involvement may well have been rumour or a distortion of some kind. It could equally have been fact.

Let us, then, examine the plausibility of this. Could Osberne have known, or known of, Katherine prior to this time, which might give him a reason to call her by her previous title? He stated that he came from Gloucester, which is on the border with south Wales, Katherine's home during her first marriage until early 1532, so it is possible that he had heard of her. It is also possible that the people of that region continued to think of Katherine as Lady Rhys, since they had known her under that title and she continued to administer her jointure lands there. However, the wording of Osberne's report does not suggest that he had met Katherine personally in the north, which means that he must have been given her name by the rebels. This could have come from the troops that she was reported to have brought with her. The only place from which Katherine could

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<sup>98</sup> See Davies, 'Henry Stafford, tenth Baron Stafford (1501-1563)', *ODNB* [accessed 7 June 2012].

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*; Dodds and Dodds, I, p. 287.

realistically have gathered troops is from her Welsh jointure lands, because she did not have any authority to call musters on her husband's estates in Somerset and Dorset. These troops would undoubtedly have known her previously as Lady Rhys and not Lady Daubeney. Though studies of the make-up of the rebels of the Pilgrimage of Grace make little mention of any Welsh troops, we know that the Earl of Derby's proposed force in early November 1536 included men of north Wales, and the Earl of Shrewsbury was said to have brought Welsh mercenaries, though fighting on the side of the King rather than the rebels.<sup>100</sup> It does not seem unlikely that there might also have been Welshmen on the side of the rebels.

It is most likely that Katherine's troops would have joined the rebellion at York. Rebellion began in Lincolnshire on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1536 but had petered out by the middle of the month. Osborne's report was written up on 29 November, suggesting that he had been with the troops perhaps during the middle of that month, after the initial Lincolnshire rebellion had ended, which means that he was most probably somewhere in Yorkshire with the bulk of the rebel force. Katherine's troops must therefore also have been in Yorkshire by this time. Osborne's description of the rebels' coining Katherine's plate shows that they must have been somewhere with a mint, and York is the only location possible for this. Katherine could easily have mustered troops from Wales and marched northwards in time to join the rebellion at York in mid-November; her brother the Duke of Norfolk mustered troops from Norfolk, almost as far away, and made it to the north within the same timeframe, and Osborne himself had come north with a host from Gloucester.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> See Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*; Gunn, 'Peers, Commons and Gentry', pp. 52-79; Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace*; *idem*, *The Pilgrims' Complaint*; TNA SP1/112, fol. 97; BL Cotton MS Nero B XI, fol. 262.

<sup>101</sup> Head, pp. 136-8.

Osborne's wording suggests that Katherine herself had personally escorted the plate and troops to the rebels – 'my lady Rysse ys come to them'. Katherine did have connections to the north. Her two sons were being brought up in the household of Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, whose own behaviour during the Pilgrimage has been described as 'suspect'. Though he did not actively join the rebels, he did not oppose them either, fleeing to his stronghold of Norham-on-Tweed until hostilities had ceased.<sup>102</sup> Katherine could have sheltered with him. Alternatively, the Countess of Derby, wife of the equally prevaricating Edward, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Derby, was Katherine's younger sister Dorothy.<sup>103</sup> It seems plausible that she could have stayed with the Derbys at Lathom during the rebellion, or even used a legitimate visit to her sister as cover for her trip northwards. Katherine also had the financial wherewithal to donate plate to the rebels. She had been made rich both from her first marriage and her recent divorce, and now had an annual income of almost £300.<sup>104</sup> It is therefore factually plausible that 'Lady Rysse' was indeed Katherine.

Why, then, might she have chosen to involve herself so publicly? Personally accompanying her troops north to the rebels was not necessary and suggests deliberate choice. Despite the usual lack of official punishment for women's actions, Katherine's previous experience shows that it was also incredibly risky. One of the men responsible for suppressing the rebellion was her half-brother the Duke of Norfolk, who, as argued earlier, was also

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<sup>102</sup> D. G. Newcombe, 'Cuthbert Tunstall (1474-1559), bishop of Durham and diplomat', *ODNB* [accessed 7 January 2013].

<sup>103</sup> For discussion of the Earl of Derby's behaviour during the rebellion, see B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672* (Manchester: Manchester University Press for the Chetham Society, 1983), p. 164, and Edward M. Zevin, *The Life of Edward Stanley, Third Earl of Derby (1521-1572): Noble Power and the Tudor Monarchy* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), pp. 83-124.

<sup>104</sup> Her jointure from her first marriage was worth £200, and her divorce settlement entitled her to £80 per year: TNA SC12/25/53; TNA SP3/9, fol. 36.

responsible for Katherine's unwanted second marriage. Katherine's relations with Norfolk already appear to have been shaky, since he had pushed her into this second marriage and refused to support her divorce.<sup>105</sup> Her adventures in Wales had surely taught her that rebellious entanglements were dangerous, since her last effort had led to the execution of her first husband.

Yet these in themselves are clear motivations. Jansen has stated that she has found a clear difference between women whose protests were about religious doctrine or dogma, and those whose rebellion was more concerned with legitimate authority and rule.<sup>106</sup> As we have seen, the Henrician government had executed her first husband on a spurious charge of high treason. They had effectively caused her widowhood, enabling her subsequent remarriage to the unpleasant Lord Daubeney, which had led to a lengthy and stressful divorce process undertaken without the support of her family.<sup>107</sup> Katherine might be forgiven for believing that the King and his advisors had inadvertently spoiled her life. This was ample motivation for revenge. Katherine therefore had plenty of reason to identify more strongly with the Pilgrims than with her own family or the Henrician government, and this shows how women could find themselves protesting against not one, but both of these authorities.

Nevertheless, this was dangerous, since she now had no husband to hide behind. Lord Daubeney does not appear to have been involved with the rebellion in any capacity, and he did not suffer for Katherine's behaviour. Her choice of name, if choice it was, could thus be read in two possible ways. It may have been a deliberate statement, a reminder of her previous rebellious identity redolent with threats of revenge. Alternatively it may have been a form of disguise. Yet

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<sup>105</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>106</sup> Jansen, p. 141.

<sup>107</sup> See Chapter 5.



Katherine had not previously shown herself keen to hide her activities, and indeed, none of the other women involved appear to have tried to do this.<sup>108</sup> If her name was a disguise, it was perhaps a necessary one in order to facilitate her journey north. In either case she was running risks. Even if the state chose to follow precedent and overlook her behaviour, Katherine herself was a living example of the potential recriminations from a noblewoman's own family.

Where were the rest of the Howards at this time? As a whole they were suffering disgrace from the fall of Anne Boleyn in June 1536 and several family members were evidently keen to reinstate themselves in the King's affections. We have already seen that Katherine's half-brother the Duke of Norfolk was sent north to suppress the rebellion. Initially his eldest son Henry, Earl of Surrey accompanied him, but the King appears to have been sufficiently nervous of Norfolk's loyalty to demand that Henry remain at home in East Anglia along with his younger brother Thomas as sureties for their father's behaviour.<sup>109</sup> Katherine's brother Lord William Howard went north in the King's host, and a letter from him to Cromwell shows that he took troops from their mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk's lands.<sup>110</sup> Agnes herself moved her household from Horsham in Sussex to Norfolk House in Lambeth, across the river from the court at some point between October and the end of the year, perhaps to ensure that there was a representative of the family in proximity to the King whilst Norfolk was away.<sup>111</sup> Other family members, however, had spent 1536 adding to the dynasty's disgrace. Norfolk was still separated from his wife Elizabeth, who

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<sup>108</sup> Jansen, pp. 24-37.

<sup>109</sup> Head, pp. 136-7.

<sup>110</sup> TNA SP1/109, fols. 96-96v; TNA SP1/107, fol. 127.

<sup>111</sup> Her son's letter of 10 October is dated from Horsham (TNA SP1/107, fol. 127) but we know that she employed Henry Mannox, music tutor, in Lambeth around the end of this year: Mannox stated in November 1541 that he had come to Agnes' service 'about v yeres past', which would date his appointment to the autumn of 1536 (TNA SP1/167, fol. 117).

was living at Redbourn in Hertfordshire. At some stage during the autumn of this year she slandered her husband, accusing him of drastic physical abuse during one of her pregnancies. She then travelled to London to attempt to see him on his return from the north in December, about which he was not pleased.<sup>112</sup> Their daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, had come under suspicion earlier that year for having helped Katherine's brother, Lord Thomas Howard, to secretly marry the King's niece Lady Margaret Douglas.<sup>113</sup> In December 1536 Lord Thomas was still in the Tower and Mary, having been suddenly widowed in June, was harassing her father Norfolk to secure her jointure from the King.<sup>114</sup> Jane Parker-Boleyn, Lady Rochford, and Lady Margaret Howard, wife of Lord William, had been briefly imprisoned in the Tower in the summer of 1535 for joining the city of London's wives in a demonstration against the Queen.<sup>115</sup> Katherine herself had gone through an embarrassing divorce process earlier in 1536.<sup>116</sup>

It is easy to see that Katherine's involvement with the Pilgrimage of Grace may not have stood out when placed in the context of the rest of the family's misdemeanours during the same period. This may explain why she suffered no visible consequences from her family for her involvement with rebellion. Nor was she punished under the law. However, neither were most of the other noblewomen involved, and Gunn points out that very few aristocratic or gentry men were actively prosecuted either.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 394-394v.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>115</sup> Catharine Davies, 'Jane Boleyn [née Parker] Viscountess Rochford (d. 1542), *courtier*', *ODNB* [accessed 17 January 2013].

<sup>116</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>117</sup> Gunn, 'Peers, Commons and Gentry', pp. 52-3.

Most of the other women involved had considerable personal status or influential family connections, and Sharon Jansen has identified this as a deciding factor in the treatment of rebellious women.<sup>118</sup> This could go in either direction: their relations could save them, or could potentially condemn them. The only noblewoman to pay with her life was Margaret Cheyne, a.k.a. Lady Bulmer, who was burnt at the stake. Margaret was the wife of Sir John Bulmer, who had participated in the risings and also lost his life. She was also the illegitimate daughter of the executed traitor Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. Jansen concludes that she was condemned to death not because she had no influential connections but because she was the daughter of a convicted traitor, and her actions looked very different when seen in this light. Lady Bulmer, was, in fact, distantly connected to Katherine. Lady Bulmer's half-sister Elizabeth Stafford was the estranged wife of the Duke of Norfolk, Katherine's half-brother. Jansen has wondered whether Lady Bulmer's rebellion was partly motivated by disgust at Norfolk's abandonment of his wife, her half-sister, and whether these family connections might also explain Norfolk's readiness to believe her guilty of treason. If this was the case, Lady Bulmer's motives were markedly similar to those we have uncovered for Katherine, and underlying family connections may have played an equally important role in the consequences for both women.

Though the Howards had remarried Katherine out of the family, and had not visibly supported her through her divorce, this could not erase the blood connection between them. Katherine may possibly have been motivated to join the Pilgrimage of Grace by ideas of revenge upon her natal family, and the Duke

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<sup>118</sup> Jansen, Ch. 1, pp. 5-37.

of Norfolk in turn might have been happy to see her punished for this; nevertheless it would have reflected badly on him and, indeed, on the government if they had had to publicly acknowledge that a sister of their military commander had been involved with the rebels. Norfolk's position, as well as Katherine's gender, may therefore have inadvertently protected her from any consequences.

Katherine's case adds to the limited body of knowledge regarding women's involvement in rebellion, and this chapter begins to address a shortfall in our understanding of aristocratic women's activities in this regard. Clearly the Henrician government was aware of noblewomen's capacity for action and was concerned by this. The reason we know of many of these women's involvement is because government ministers deliberately questioned other rebels about them. There is also clear evidence that the regime did recognise the actions of women in the field when they were engaged in suppressing, rather than inciting, rebellion; Catherine Stafford-Neville, Countess of Westmorland, had been left as her husband's deputy in the region when the risings began again in January 1537, and Sir Thomas Tempest wrote that she stayed the country and 'rather playeth the parte of a knyght thenne of a Ladye'.<sup>119</sup> However, the other examples from the Pilgrimage of Grace show that the government was not prepared to punish noblewomen for rebellion at this time. This highlights the problems faced by most early modern governments in dealing with women who stepped out of line, as several studies have shown: they could not wholly ignore rebellious women without appearing to condone their actions, but likewise could not openly

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<sup>119</sup> TNA SP1/115, fol. 196.

recognise women's trespasses against the social order without thereby undermining that hierarchy.<sup>120</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that Katherine was not punished by the law for her actions. However, her case does provide an interesting insight into the ways in which this paradox could be treated, and adds another dimension to the interactions between aristocratic families and the state. This is most evident in reactions to her Welsh rebellion of 1529-31. No official notice was taken of her actions, despite the fact that Ferrers openly blamed her for rabble-rousing and the Spanish ambassador Chapuys picked up the rumours that were clearly flying around London concerning her gutsy – perhaps foolhardy – handling of events. We have seen that this was not necessarily unusual, since Tudor England had yet to see noblewomen involved in rebellion on a national scale and likewise avoided officially punishing them when this occurred during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536-7. The next event in Katherine's life, however – her marriage to Henry Daubeney – may help to explain the government's apathy towards her: her swift divorce from Daubeney strongly suggests that this was an unwanted second marriage, probably arranged by the Howards with the covert blessing of the King and his ministers, most likely with the aim of removing Katherine from both Wales and the royal court and placing her under control in order to avoid a repeat performance. The state did not have to take official notice of Katherine, and her family were able to avoid the stain on their reputation. This was a significant form of cooperation and one which I have yet to find repeated elsewhere.

Quite clearly women were not always concerned with the impact of their actions on their families, and were not always working on their behalf. However,

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<sup>120</sup> See above, pp. 134-5.

this case also shows that a woman's rebellion did not necessarily affect her family's political position; the cooperation between state and family meant that no Howards appear to have suffered in any way from Katherine's actions. This arguably suggests that women's rebellion had little political impact, and would explain why Katherine's actions appear so unusual. If women could gain no advantage from open rebellion, subversive, behind-the-scenes activity clearly remained the better choice. This chapter therefore shows how patriarchal authority was perpetuated by men in positions of influence.

Their use of marriage as an instrument of control appears to have backfired, however, since Katherine divorced Lord Daubeney and gained ample motivation to aid the rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace 1536. Was 'Lady Rysse' definitely Katherine? It is impossible to say for sure as the source material is simply too fragmentary. Nonetheless, in the absence of any alternative identifications it does seem likely, and this serves to highlight Katherine's particular rebellious tendencies. Though she was not the only noblewoman to become involved in inciting, organising and provisioning the rebels during this revolt, there were not many others who did so, and she was certainly the only member of the Howard dynasty to do this. That her efforts were once again ignored further illustrates the cooperative links between noblewomen, their families, and the government. Katherine, it seems, identified more strongly with the rebels than with the Howards or the King; a rebel with a cause indeed.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Once a Howard, Always a Howard? Marital Strife and Dynastic Identity**

Where marriage was concerned, the women of the Howard family did not possess a particularly successful track record. This chapter analyses their marriages in order to shed light on contemporary understandings of women's position within the family; their own, and their family's, relationship to state authorities; and to uncover yet more of the hidden female half of the Howard narrative. We have followed the dynastic implications of one broken marriage already: that of Elizabeth Stafford-Howard and Thomas Howard II, Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. Whilst Elizabeth's trauma is arguably the best documented and has received the most scholarly attention, she was not the only Howard woman to suffer a problematic marital alliance.<sup>1</sup> All three of the Howard 'daughters' of this study – Anne, Countess of Oxford, Katherine, Countess of Bridgewater, and Mary, Duchess of Richmond – also encountered significant difficulties relating to marriage, including abusive husbands, divorce, and jointure disputes during widowhood. We saw in Chapter 3 that marital strife was not uncommon in early modern England. Other notable examples of warring couples include Queen Catherine Parr's brother William, and his wife Anne Bouchier; the poet Sir Thomas Wyatt and Elizabeth Brooke; Henry 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland and Mary Talbot.<sup>2</sup> However, the number of marriage disputes within the Howard family during this short timespan, c. 1526-1539, is certainly above average and I have found no other aristocratic family who suffered so

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> See James, 'A Tudor Divorce', pp. 199-204; Burrow, Sir Thomas Wyatt (c. 1503-1542)', *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013]; Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4.

many in such a short period.<sup>3</sup> The Howard daughters' marital problems are therefore worthy of closer analysis: why did they suffer so many, how were they dealt with, and what were the personal, familial, and political effects of these episodes?

There is a significant body of work on the legal and social aspects of marriage breakdown in England during this period. Tim Stretton's valuable research into couples' use of the common law to aid separation builds on work by Helmholz, Houlbrooke, Carlson and others concerning the role of church courts in medieval and early modern marriage disputes.<sup>4</sup> Susan Amussen and Joanne Bailey have considered early modern domestic violence in this context, and Amy Louise Ericksen has investigated the financial implications of separation.<sup>5</sup> There have also been a number of case studies of aristocratic marriage failure, such as Susan James' work on the Parrs and Barbara Harris' on the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk.<sup>6</sup> Marital disputes, however, were not confined within marriage itself. The financial and dynastic implications of widowhood could also cause conflict between a woman and her marital family, and this too has received attention. While some historians, notably Barbara Harris, have argued that widows valued, and were valued within, their marital families due to

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<sup>3</sup> The closest being the Brandon family, where Mary, Lady Powis, and Anne, Lady Monteagle, two daughters of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, both suffered marital problems across the 1520s, 30s and 40s. See Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 94-5 and 174-5.

<sup>4</sup> Stretton, 'Marriage, Separation and the Common Law', in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. by Berry and Foyster, pp. 18-39; Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*; Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*; M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987); Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp. 180-216; R. B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Amussen, pp. 70-89; Joanne Bailey, 'Cruelty and Adultery: Offences against the Institution of Marriage', in *Histories of Crime: Britain 1600-2000*, ed. by Anne-Marie Kilday and David S. Nash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 39-59; Amy Louise Ericksen, 'Possession - and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women's Ownership and Economic Roles in Early Modern England', *Women's History Review* 16:3 (2007), 369-85.

<sup>6</sup> James, 'A Tudor Divorce', pp. 199-204; Harris, 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style', pp. 371-82. See also Amy Blakeway, 'The Attempted Divorce of James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, Governor of Scotland', *Innes Review* 61:1 (2010), 1-23.



their wealth, experience, and probable ties to the next generation, others, such as Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, have contended that widows could be seen as a needless drain on their marital family's resources, whilst also generating fear that they might remarry and carry those resources to another family.<sup>7</sup> How did our two young Howard widows - Anne, Countess of Oxford, and Mary, Duchess of Richmond – personify this conflict?

Alongside the legal, social and financial specifics, what these studies of marital dispute reveal is that when early modern aristocratic women's marriages were in trouble, they almost invariably turned to their natal families for assistance. Women frequently approached their natal relatives out of necessity, since coverture prevented English noblewomen from bringing their own lawsuits against erring husbands.<sup>8</sup> As Harris states, a woman with such a husband had 'little hope of relief' without the help of men who were as powerful as he was, and this almost always meant that she needed her natal kin.<sup>9</sup> They would then petition the King or his advisers for help resolving the conflict if necessary.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that in times of trouble, a woman prioritised her natal identity above her marital identity. This chapter will focus on four cases of marital dispute to ask whether this was the case for the Howard daughters, beginning

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<sup>7</sup> Rowena E. Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers', in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. by A. J. Pollard (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), pp. 15-35; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, Ch. 4, pp. 127-74; Amy L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), Part IV, pp. 156-222, and Robert J. Kalas, 'The Noble Widow's Place in the Patriarchal Household: The Life and Career of Jeanne de Gontault', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993), 519-39; Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, eds., *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1999); Beatrice Moring, 'Widows and Economy', *History of the Family* 15:3 (2010), 215-21.

<sup>8</sup> For more on this see Harris 'Aristocratic Women and the State', in *State, Sovereigns and Society*, ed. by Carlton *et al.*, pp. 3-24.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 52 and 77.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, did this for both his daughters (Lady Powis and Lady Montegale); George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, did so for his daughter Mary, Countess of Northumberland. See Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 94-5 and 174-5, and Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4.

with the marital strife between Anne, Countess of Oxford, and her husband the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, before moving onto the divorce of Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, from her second husband Henry Daubeney, Earl of Bridgwater, and thence onto the widowhood jointure disputes of the same Anne, Countess of Oxford, and Mary, Duchess of Richmond. Did they follow the normal pattern and approach their Howard relatives for assistance, and did they – as was also the norm – receive help from that quarter?<sup>11</sup> Further to this, can these marital disputes provide insight into any of these three women's dynastic identities before or after periods of conflict, as understood by themselves, their families, or the state? This has potential implications for our understanding of the relationship between the Howard daughters and the wider Howard dynasty, and of the political impact of such episodes on the fortunes of the whole family. If all concerned still saw these women primarily as Howards even after their marriages into other aristocratic dynasties, this would suggest that there was indeed an understanding for the women that 'once a Howard, always a Howard', and this might affect the way that they and the Howard dynasty operated on a public, political stage. If, on the other hand, the women were not seen this way, or there was conflict between their own view, their families', and the state's, this too could affect their own and the Howards' success.

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In order to place the Howard women's marriage breakdowns in dynastic context, we must first ask how and why these particular marriages were made. The first of our three Howard daughters to be married was Anne. Her marriage to

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<sup>11</sup> See Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 77-9 and 177-80.

John de Vere, heir to the earldom of Oxford, was arranged by both their fathers, John de Vere, 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, and Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, by November 1511, when Anne and John were both about thirteen, and had taken place by September 1512.<sup>12</sup> The match was marginally more advantageous for the Howards than for the de Veres. In rank and political favour, the two families were equal – both held earldoms, both had equivalent wealth and lands, and both were active at court – but the de Veres held the better, i.e. the older, noble pedigree. The Howards' return to favour following their support of Richard III during the Wars of the Roses was relatively recent, as Surrey had been imprisoned in the Tower until 1487, and they had not yet recovered the Dukedom of Norfolk.<sup>13</sup> Surrey was conscious of his family's *arriviste* status and sought to legitimise this through alliance to the de Veres, one of the realm's oldest noble dynasties. While it may have occurred to the Howards that the old age of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford combined with the minority of his heir might mean they could, in future, secure the latter's wardship and bring him up in their own household alongside Anne – thus ensuring their control over the young couple – it is highly unlikely that this alone governed their choice; mortality was simply too speculative. There was no guarantee that Oxford would not live another ten years, nor that his young heir would survive into adulthood, nor even that the Howards would be able to secure the young earl's wardship, and thus it is probable that Anne's marriage was not arranged with an eye to control of her future dynastic identity.

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<sup>12</sup> As stated in the will of Anne's father-in-law the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford; TNA PROB 11/17/245. John's livery of lands in August 1520 shows that he was born in 1499. For discussion of Anne's birthdate see p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> See Virgoe, 'The Recovery of the Howards', in *Wealth and Power*, ed. by Ives, Knecht and Scarisbrick, pp. 1-20.

As it happened, though, matters did unfold in the best possible way for the Howards. Oxford died in 1513, and the Howards were granted the new earl's wardship.<sup>14</sup> He was brought up within the Howard household which meant that Anne remained there too and, as we shall see, her activities during her marriage strongly suggest that she imbibed a strong sense of natal identity during this period. Although it is probable that the Howards were originally fully prepared for Anne to subordinate her Howard identity to that of the de Veres, events proved more advantageous for them in this regard.

Surrey had less luck with his second daughter, Anne's sister Katherine, whose first marriage to Rhys ap Griffith was arranged a little later in 1514.<sup>15</sup> Here, while the Howards were indisputably of higher political and noble status, the Rhys family held rather a special position as *de facto* rulers of south Wales.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the financial arrangements reflected the disparity in actual rank. There appears to have been a contemporary idea that the bride's jointure – the sum allotted to her by her husband's family to support her in widowhood – should be worth ten percent of the dowry. Though rarely adhered to in practice, the two sums did operate on a kind of sliding scale: if the bride's family were more influential or of higher status, the jointure paid by the groom's family would be a larger proportion of the dowry sum, whereas if the groom's family were of higher status, the bride's dowry would be larger.<sup>17</sup> Katherine's dowry from the Howards was £600.<sup>18</sup> Her jointure was worth £200, a whopping third of the dowry, which suggests that the Rhys family were paying through the nose to

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<sup>14</sup> *LP I*, 2964 (80).

<sup>15</sup> NLW, Dynevor MS A 59, quoted in Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 66-9.

<sup>16</sup> Griffiths, 'Sir Rhys ap Thomas (1448/9-1525), soldier and landowner', and 'Rice family, per c. 1500-1561, gentry', *ODNB* [accessed 26 November 2012].

<sup>17</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>18</sup> Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, pp. 68-9.

secure her.<sup>19</sup> Expectations of her dynastic loyalties are less clear. Wales at this time was not yet fully annexed, socially and politically, to the rest of England; it was often seen as a lawless ‘border zone’, and to send one’s daughter there was to risk losing her to the politics of another country.<sup>20</sup> Common sense would argue that the Howards understood the effect this might have on her dynastic loyalties. Thus it is by no means clear that the Howards necessarily expected Katherine to prioritise her natal family over her marital identity.

The marriage of the last and youngest Howard daughter, Mary, tells yet another story of dynastic identity. Mary, born around 1519, belonged to a different generation of Howards, and an even more glamorous period in the family’s history. She was the daughter not of Thomas I, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, but of his son and heir Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Elizabeth Stafford-Howard. By the time her marriage came under discussion in the late 1520s the Howards had recovered their lost dukedom and were among the most influential families at the English court. They no longer had anything to prove, so there was no longer the same need to legitimise their own noble status through alliances with older, more established nobility. Consequently, the marriages arranged under Mary’s father the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk were designed to build on what they had already gained in terms of land, wealth, and status, and were often both more exalted and more lucrative than those arranged under his father the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke.<sup>21</sup> Betrothals also ceased to be permanent if a better offer came along. This happened to Mary; her first betrothal to John de Vere, Lord Bulbeck, heir of the

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<sup>19</sup> TNA SC12/25/53.

<sup>20</sup> Ciarán Brady, ‘Comparable histories?: Tudor reform in Wales and Ireland’, in *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485-1725*, ed. by Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 64-86; Philip Schwyzer, ‘The bride on the border: women and the reproduction of ethnicity in the early modern British Isles’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 5 (2002), 293-306.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix F.

15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, was broken off in December 1529 in favour of a match with Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, the King's illegitimate son.<sup>22</sup> This is not surprising, as it was widely thought that the King was intending to make Fitzroy his heir, and this would make his wife the future Queen.<sup>23</sup> At this stage a marriage to royalty was the only possible way for the Howards to marry upwards. Mary's father had had charge of the young Duke of Richmond's household for a number of years, and her brother Henry had been brought up with him, suggesting that a strong allegiance to the Howards may already have been inculcated in Richmond.<sup>24</sup> Further, in 1529 Norfolk's niece Anne Boleyn was Queen in all but name, and was officially so by the time the couple's marriage was actually solemnised in 1533, so it is likely that the Howards saw no potential conflict of interests here.<sup>25</sup> It seems clear that the Howards were not expecting that Mary would have to abandon her natal identity as a result of her marriage.

Overall, though the Howards did not intend their daughters to ignore the needs of their natal family, it is evident that in two out of three cases considered here, they were prepared for these to become subordinate to the needs of their new marital families. This, as Harris has stated, was typical.<sup>26</sup> However, it is likely that these particular three alliances give this impression because of their individual characteristics. Had Anne's marriage to the minor Earl of Oxford been arranged in the 1520s rather than the 1510s, the Howards, fully entrenched at court and within the aristocracy, would have been in a stronger bargaining

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<sup>22</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360); TNA SP1/111, fol. 204.

<sup>23</sup> Murphy, Ch. 2, pp. 41-68.

<sup>24</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360).

<sup>25</sup> Mary's marriage was noted to have taken place in a letter dated December 1533: BL Harl. MS 6148, fol. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 191-2.

position, and the dynastic loyalty of their women may have reflected this. It is not clear, for instance, what their expectations would have been for Mary had her original betrothal to the heir of the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford remained unbroken in 1529. What these marriages show above all is the strongly speculative nature of marriage brokering, and the difficulties inherent in the design of dynastic loyalty. The Howard women, it seems, were not designed to remain Howards; if they did so, it was largely due to fortuitous circumstances. With this in mind, let us turn to events during these marriages for further analysis of dynastic identity, beginning with the marriage problems of Anne Howard-de Vere, Countess of Oxford, in 1523.

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### **Anne: ‘for the styng of his honor and myn’**

The youthful fourteen years of both Anne and her new husband John de Vere, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, meant that the couple lived with Anne’s parents Thomas I and Agnes, Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, until Oxford’s twenty-first birthday in August 1520.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that the couple then moved to Hedingham Castle in Essex, the main seat of the earldom of Oxford, and began married life together as adults. Within three short years the Oxfords’ marriage had broken down and Anne’s future looked uncertain.

The chief source for this episode is a series of contemporary letters between Anne, her husband Oxford, and Cardinal Wolsey, preserved in the

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<sup>27</sup> *LP* III, 956.

Henrician state papers.<sup>28</sup> The letters began on 5 April 1523 and culminated in an unusual regulatory ordinance issued by the Court of Chancery in February 1524.<sup>29</sup> It is clear from the evidence that the root of the problem was the chasm between Oxford's actual behaviour and society's expectations of how an earl ought to behave. In short, he dressed like a popinjay, drank and ate too much, failed to manage his money or estates, spent all his time hunting, kept bad company, and was unkind to his wife. The ordinance eventually used to regulate his actions ordered him to make no grants or annuities without the advice of Cardinal Wolsey, so that 'the great Decaie of his Lands' could be avoided; he was to 'use himself honourably, prudently, and sadly, forbearinge all riotous and wild companies, excessive and superfluous apparel'; 'have a vigilant regard that he use not much to drink hot wines, ne to drink or sitt up late'; 'moderate his hunteing or other Disports'; 'give no Ear to simple or evil tongued Persons'; and 'lovinglie, familiarlie, and kindlie intreate and demeane himself towards the said Countesse his wife'.<sup>30</sup> It is highly unlikely that he would have been permitted to behave like this whilst living in his father-in-law the Duke of Norfolk's household during his wardship. In fact, he would have been taught the skills of administration and financial management that an earl needed. Clearly, then, his bad behaviour following freedom was a deliberate choice; a deliberate rebellion, perhaps, against the Howard family, who had controlled his adolescence.

Perhaps because of his evident disinterest in such mundane matters, Oxford also failed to appoint the necessary officers to help him manage his money, lands and household. The series of letters in 1523 refer to the need for a

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<sup>28</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols 149- 156.

<sup>29</sup> Four manuscript copies survive: BL Add. MS 34324, fols 1-2; BL Add. MS 46410, fol. 165; BL Hargrave MS 227, fols 472-76; BL Hargrave MS 249, fol. 226. The latter is printed as Ellis, 'Copy of an Order made by Cardinal Wolsey', *Archaeologia* 19 (1821), 62-5.

<sup>30</sup> BL Hargrave MS 249, f. 226.



steward, surveyor, chaplain, treasurer, receiver, and auditor. This lack of officers compounded the problems between the Oxfords, for it impacted on Anne too.

During 1523 she wrote to Wolsey that ‘ther wase never pore woman so trobyll[ed] as I am and all ffor lake off ofycres’.<sup>31</sup> Though she attempted to advise Oxford and to take on some of these duties herself, ‘yt ys natt thought mete for me to do that I do with out the helpe off som other offycers than I haue...I cannat be suffered to sey meyn advyse in no causys... yf I shuld medyl in anny off these concerns further than I do I surteyne that I shuld never leue in rest ther ffor I meadyll no further than hys household causys’.<sup>32</sup> It was normal for noblewomen to be involved in some degree of household and estate management, and Archer has argued that noble couples functioned as partnerships in this regard.<sup>33</sup> However, even noblewomen who managed estates alone when their husbands were absent had officers to help them; the immensely active estate management of Margaret, Countess of Bath, for instance, was facilitated by the regular reports of her husband’s officers.<sup>34</sup> Anne’s attempt to take on some of these extra duties was therefore somewhat unusual.

In the same letter she required Wolsey to intervene in a matter of a debt owed to Oxford, and asked him to ensure that she would not ‘bere the reproche to meadyll without offycers’.<sup>35</sup> Clearly in the face of Oxford’s incapacity - some of which may have been down to ill health, since in April 1523 he wrote that he planned to go to London ‘as sone as it shall please god to send me helth and

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<sup>31</sup> TNA SP1/27, fol. 152.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.

<sup>33</sup> Archer, “How ladies...who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates”, p. 149-50.

<sup>34</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

strengthe' - Anne had exerted her influence.<sup>36</sup> As the reference regarding Oxford's debt shows, Anne held the purse strings, and she also astutely sized up Oxford's poor advisors, warning Wolsey that anyone he sent to counter them 'had need to be [a] substancyll man'.<sup>37</sup> Her statement that 'yt ys thought by many that I may do moche in my lords causys' suggests that she also thought this, and thus that she knew her capabilities rivalled his.<sup>38</sup> Though Anne was clearly wary of Oxford's rebukes concerning her 'meddling', her letters show that she was not prepared to give way entirely.

Out of all of Oxford's bad habits, Anne was most disturbed by the company that he kept, notably his cousin and heir, Sir John Vere. Vere was fifteen years older than Oxford and appears to have had considerable influence over him – Anne wrote that 'my lord wyll do nothing without the counsel off Sir John Vere'.<sup>39</sup> He stood to inherit the earldom unless Oxford and Anne produced an heir and was understandably keen to do so. However, the way he went about ensuring this was akin to bullying. Anne wrote to Wolsey that 'they [Oxford's friends] care letyll ffor hys comyng forward so the inherytannce meyt be saved for Sir John Wer hath spoken largely to my fface'.<sup>40</sup> This suggests that Oxford's friends, led by Vere, were actively stirring trouble between him and Anne so that they might not produce an heir. Unfortunately she does not specify how they went about this, but her complaint and continued childlessness suggest that they were successful. Oxford would have known that it was his duty to produce an heir regardless of his feelings towards his wife, or towards his friends: the Ordinance of 1524 specifies that he should treat Anne kindly 'for bringeing

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<sup>36</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols. 149, 154v-155.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 153.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 153.

for the fruit and children between them'.<sup>41</sup> This suggests that he preferred to hand his estates to a paternal cousin rather than to a half-Howard son, and is significant indeed. It may shed light on contemporary understanding of Anne's dynastic identity during her marriage. As already seen, Oxford objected strongly to Anne's evident household dominance. This may have been because he thought it unfitting for his wife to do the duties of estate officers, but if this was the problem he could simply have hired the administrators he needed. He apparently made no move to do so, as he allowed Wolsey to do this for him.<sup>42</sup> When viewed alongside his rebellious behaviour and reluctance to produce an heir, it seems possible that Oxford disliked Anne's activities because he saw them as a continuation of the Howards' earlier control of his person and estate. This would mean that Oxford and his friends continued to associate Anne more strongly with the Howard dynasty than the de Veres even after they had moved to a separate household. Thus her dynastic identity itself contributed to their marital problems.

Do Anne's attempts to improve her domestic situation shed any further light on her own understanding of her familial loyalties? Her surviving letters are all addressed to Cardinal Wolsey, which shows that she appealed to the highest possible state authority for help. However, the content of the letters reveals that, as expected, she probably went to her natal relatives, the Howards, first. Early on in the sequence she mentioned 'my cosyn Tylney, my servant' as her go-between with Wolsey.<sup>43</sup> The Tylneys were the natal family of Anne's mother Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, and it is plausible that Anne's use of a Tylney cousin in this affair reflects her mother's knowledge and involvement – this argues for the importance not only of natal relatives, but of female kinship networks in such

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<sup>41</sup> BL Hargrave MS 249, f. 226.

<sup>42</sup> TNA SP1/27, f. 149.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 152.

circumstances.<sup>44</sup> Further to this, the Chancery ordinance enrolled in February 1524 implies her father's involvement as well, stating that the couple were to return to live under his roof.<sup>45</sup> Later in the sequence of letters she also mentioned her half-brother Thomas, later 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk.<sup>46</sup> Somewhat unusually, the male relative most active in her cause was this half-brother and not her father. Though Harris has shown that it was normal for a brother to take on the care of his sister once their father was dead, Anne's father was still alive when her half-brother began to do this.<sup>47</sup> This was probably because her father was in his eighties and had retired from public, political life by this point, allowing his son and heir – Anne's half-brother – to take over many of his former roles.<sup>48</sup> Clearly this applied to familial as well as political concerns. There are no surviving letters from Anne's father, Thomas I, relating to her problems, and when in need of succour on at least two occasions she was sheltered by her half-brother Thomas II and not her parents.<sup>49</sup> After their father's death in May 1524 Anne's brother - now Duke of Norfolk - went to some effort to continue to place the matter before the King despite spending most of 1523, Anne's worst year, away as Lieutenant of the North.<sup>50</sup> This shows how important women's marriages remained to their natal families.

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<sup>44</sup> Other cases with more surviving correspondence suggest that women often turned to female relatives first: see Sara Mendelson and Mary E. O'Connor, "'Thy passionately loving sister and faithfull friend': Anne Dormer letters to her sister Lady Trumbull", in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers, and Others*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 206-15.

<sup>45</sup> BL Hargrave MS 249, fol. 226: 'The same Earle shall incontientlie discharge and breake his household, sojourning...with his father-in-law the Duke of Norffolke'.

<sup>46</sup> TNA SP1/27, f. 154v-155.

<sup>47</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 180-1.

<sup>48</sup> Head, p. 68.

<sup>49</sup> Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 49.

<sup>50</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols. 154v-155: 'I haue spokyn with my lord off Norffolke off latte by hym I ded perceyve that the kyngs grace dothe ley great whayte to haue knowledge how that my lord dothe use hym selfe in so moche that my lorde my brother ded show me that the kyngs grace wold that my lord had som wysemen a bowt hym and I percayve wyll by my lord my brother that he mendyth to counsell the kyngs grace to the same at hys next metyng with hym'.

It is likely, then, that her letters to Wolsey were written with the support and possibly help of her natal family. This order of intervention was normal for women who found themselves in such delicate situations, as the circumstances of Mary Brandon-Stanley, Lady Mounteagle, show. Daughter of the powerful Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, she had had a very similar marriage to Anne. Like Anne's husband Oxford, Mary's husband Thomas Stanley had been brought up in her father's household as his ward, and the pair had been married whilst both were still minors. Again like Oxford, Mounteagle proved himself a thoroughly incompetent estate manager once he attained his majority, and Mary was evidently unable to influence him. Like Anne, Mary seems to have appealed to her father Suffolk, who then involved Cromwell.<sup>51</sup> However, there is no evidence that Mary wrote to Cromwell herself, since there are no surviving petitions within the state papers. What she did do was criticise her husband around the royal court, something that Anne, not being a lady-in-waiting, managed to avoid; Mounteagle wrote to Cromwell rather petulantly complaining that Mary's 'ungoodlye conv[er]sacion' frequently made him look like 'a weyke spirite and lakke of audacyte'.<sup>52</sup> As Mary never received any real assistance from the state in reforming her marriage, it may be surmised that Anne's approach was by far the more successful. This suggests that there may have been a form of established 'chain of intervention' that women were expected to follow in such cases.

Close reading of Anne's letters is revealing in this regard as it exposes the contradictions inherent not only in Anne's understanding of her own loyalties, but in the way that she presented herself to Wolsey in order to secure favourable

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<sup>51</sup> Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 94-5 and 174-5.

<sup>52</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 219.

intervention. Her letters are written in her own hand and are likewise signed by her. Since her husband used a secretary this was clearly not due to the lack of household staff; it is more likely that she chose to do this firstly in order to maintain the privacy of her correspondence, but secondly because, as James Daybell has shown, to write in one's own hand was considered to add a personal touch, underlining the writer's regard for the recipient.<sup>53</sup> Anne wrote herself as the quintessentially dutiful wife, assuming the mantel of household control not because she wanted to, but because her husband's hopelessness left her no choice. She asked Wolsey for household officers not because it would make her life easier – though evidently it would – but 'for the stying of his honor and myn'.<sup>54</sup> Here, she clearly constructs herself as Oxford's wife, a member of the de Vere family, prioritising her marital identity in the way that a dutiful wife was supposed to do. To cement this impression of duty and subservience her petitions were particularly deferential even by the standards of the time outlined by James Daybell, frequently spending not one sentence but several lines at the beginning and end of each letter marvelling at Wolsey's 'gret goodness':

My lord I hyumebly beseche your grace to take no dysplaser with me that I [am] so bold to trobyll your grace with so many letters butt I troust you consider that I haue no [other] ffriend nor help but only your grace ffor you ware the setteying forward off me ffor I haue notheyng nor wasse evyr leyke to haue hade yf yt had natt bene by your grachus goodness whyche I do dayley consider / [I] pray ffor the preservacon off your grace as I wold do ffor my wolfe leyff / Youre hymbyll assured bedwoman A Oxyntford.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> James Daybell, 'Female Literacy and the Social Conventions of Women's Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. by Daybell, pp. 59-76.

<sup>54</sup> TNA SP1/27, fol. 50.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 150-155.

Today, this would be described as ‘gushing’, and I would argue that this would be true for the sixteenth-century too.<sup>56</sup>

But was Anne really the dutiful wife she made herself out to be, or was the reality more complicated? Foyster tells us that to suggest that a man had lost control over his household was deeply insulting, as it implied that he had failed to maintain the natural order by allowing his God-given authority to be usurped.<sup>57</sup> If he could not control his domestic affairs, early modern minds reasoned that he was unfit for any public office. Anne’s words clearly demonstrate that this had occurred, and moreover, she did not trouble to hide it from Wolsey. She made it clear that she had assumed control of the finances – concerning the hiring of an officer sent by Wolsey, Oxford wrote rather vaguely that he would be glad to give the man ‘suche yerely rewarde and ffee for the same as your grace shall thynk good and resonable’, whereas Anne wrote that ‘I did offer hym forte pounds a yer hys chamber hys wyffe to be with hym as long as he woll haue hur fower servants and iiij horse... iff your grace do leyke thys offyr my lord must know further off your graceys plesuor’.<sup>58</sup> As we saw previously, she also made it clear that she had taken on more household management than wives generally did, incurring Oxford’s displeasure. This belies her expressions of humility. Furthermore, Foyster tells us that there was perceived to be a link between a man’s sexual actions and his wife’s behaviour.<sup>59</sup> When placed against the backdrop of her household dominance, for Anne to argue that Oxford’s bad friends were turning him away from her sexually served to show that not only was he neglecting his public duty as an earl to provide an

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<sup>56</sup> For more on levels of humility in women’s letters, see Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 246-50.

<sup>57</sup> Foyster, p. 87.

<sup>58</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols. 149-150.

<sup>59</sup> Foyster, p. 67.

heir, but that this was indirectly causing her insubordination. She thereby constructed the bad company Oxford kept as an alternative form of adultery, bringing shame and disorder to the household, the family, the nobility as a whole, and thus to England. A damning slur indeed.

There were also more obvious chinks in her dutiful epistolary armour where, regardless of the reality, she forgot to write herself as the dutiful wife and petitioner. On one occasion, after complaining that Oxford had acted against her explicit advice regarding the granting of an annuity, she snapped that she trusted that the unsuitable recipient ‘shall natt in joy yt yf I may haue eny conffort of your grace’.<sup>60</sup> Evidently she had written this letter whilst still angry as it clearly reveals her lack of patience with her husband’s failings: this was not the tone of a subservient wife. This letter, too, failed to exhibit the excessive expressions of thanks and humility found in her lengthier, more considered epistles, ending with the short ‘and thus J<sup>es</sup>hu preserve your grace in long prosperyte’.<sup>61</sup> There is also evidence that, despite her honeyed words, Anne was apparently not always convinced that Wolsey was doing his best for her, and she was not above inserting a pointed note on this subject. In the last letter of the sequence, as we have seen, she mentioned that her half-brother the Duke of Norfolk had spoken to the King on her behalf and that the latter was anxious to know that things were improving, in particular that Oxford had ‘som wysemen a bowt hym’.<sup>62</sup> This made it clear that Anne had felt the need to invoke aid other than Wolsey’s, and that the King would now be ensuring he did as he had promised.<sup>63</sup> Anne was not, in practice, a subordinate, dutiful wife and her letters show that she also

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<sup>60</sup> TNA SP1/27, fol. 153.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 153.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.



occasionally failed to keep up her epistolary pretence in this regard. This suggests that she was not as loyal to her husband and her marital family as she seemed.

Undoubtedly Anne was young and lacked experience, and this may account for some of the less subtle aspects of her petitioning. But did it work? Measures were certainly taken. Wolsey involved himself in the couple's daily life, attempting to take young Oxford in hand by opening a separate correspondence with the earl on the subject.<sup>64</sup> As a more immediate and ongoing help, Wolsey began sending them men from his own retinue to act as the household officers that Anne and Oxford lacked. It is difficult to know how unusual this was; nobles did recommend servants to one another as the letters of some of the Howard women show, but Anne's letters give the impression that Wolsey was responding to the Oxfords' desperate need, rather than passing on servants he did not need himself.<sup>65</sup> This was doubtless an attempt to remove a key source of strife by rendering it unnecessary for Anne to take on so many roles of household management, thereby restoring the ordinary household hierarchy. Not only did this serve to place good, rather than bad, influences around the young earl, but also gave Wolsey unbiased eyes and ears within the establishment. Since one of the officers sent by Wolsey was a treasurer, Anthony Hansard, and he also attempted to send them Robert Heneage to be auditor, we might also infer that they were designed to bring Oxford's finances under greater control without recourse to Anne.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols. 149 and 156.

<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, found places for some of the late Duke of Richmond's servants in 1536: TNA SP1/106, fol. 219.

<sup>66</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols. 153, 156. The latter shows that Oxford had appointed John Wiseman auditor – this was the grant to which Anne had objected so strenuously.

Wolsey's final stroke in Anne's favour was a masterful piece of legislation designed to regulate Oxford's behaviour in almost every respect. An ordinance was enrolled in the Court of Chancery in February 1524 by Wolsey, 'devised by the King's speciall commandement'.<sup>67</sup> This very thorough document ordered that the earl's expenses were to be limited; his servants exchanged for those appointed by Wolsey; he was to use himself 'sadly, moderately, and with temperance and discretion'; and most damning of all, break up his own household and return, with Anne, to her father's house. To ensure that he did these things, he was made to pay a £2000 bond to Wolsey. It was the ultimate sixteenth-century ASBO, and, as far as can be established, unique. The ordinance upheld Anne in every respect. It specifically ordered Oxford to 'give no Ear to simple or evil tongued Persons which...shall contrive seditious or slanderous Reports between them [himself and the Countess]' – this was clearly a response to her distress at the company he kept and was designed to remove him from the influence of his heir Sir John Vere.<sup>68</sup>

It is difficult to know whether the ordinance had the desired effect, or even how it was perceived at the time, as no contemporary discussion of it has survived. The measure most likely to keep Oxford in check was the return to his father-in-law's household, as this would place him back under the kind of minute control Wolsey's ordinance outlined. However, Anne's father died in May 1524 and the last letter in the sequence shows that the move had not been effected beforehand; as we saw earlier, Anne wrote that she had lately spoken to her *brother* the duke of Norfolk –placing this letter after the death of her father in 1524, and therefore after the ordinance - and had heard from him that the King

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<sup>67</sup> See above, n. 29.

<sup>68</sup> BL Hargrave MS 249, fol. 226.

was very desirous to know ‘how that my lord dothe use hym selfe’. The King thought that Oxford should have ‘som wysemen a bowt hym’, and Norfolk intended to counsel His Majesty to provide such men at their next meeting.<sup>69</sup> This suggests that the couple remained in their own household, and therefore that the lack of officers, and Oxford’s bad company, were still a problem. However, towards the end of the letter she thanked Wolsey for the ‘quyet lyffe that you haue brought me to’, suggesting that the ordinance had had some positive effect.<sup>70</sup>

The use of such a measure provides a revealing insight into contemporary perceptions of women’s gender roles and dynastic identity. It therefore adds another layer to the existing Howard narrative and shows how the domestic and the political could intersect. In attempting to assume some of the duties of estate officers such as treasurer and auditor, Anne was moving beyond the normal level of estate management undertaken by noblewomen during this period. Though she appears to have done so only out of necessity, it is clear that she had an aptitude for the work and was happy to assume this amount of control. It is equally clear that Oxford was not happy to allow this, and Wolsey’s sending of officers suggests that he was also willing to relegate Anne to a lesser position. Nevertheless, though keen to reinstate traditional gender roles, the ordinance shows that the state was less concerned with women’s dynastic identities, or the degree of Howard control over the earldom of Oxford. What concerned them was the earl’s behaviour more generally, because he was proving himself unfit for public office and therefore potentially useless, if not actively dangerous, to the Crown. This was not what Oxford wanted to hear. His behaviour suggests that he

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<sup>69</sup> TNA SP1/27, fols 154v-155.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 154v-155.

resented the level of control that the Howard dynasty continued to have over himself and his family, and that he saw Anne's household dominance as a fundamental part of this, thus identifying her firmly with her natal family rather than his own. This shows how marital disputes can shed light on women's loyalties outside these times of conflict: Anne's strong natal identity itself was a cause of her marital problems.<sup>71</sup> It is therefore unsurprising to find that Anne followed the established pattern by applying to her natal kin for help in dealing with her errant husband. Fortunately for all, perhaps, Oxford lived only another two years.

**Katherine: 'I have many kyne and fewe that dothe for me...'**

Anne's younger sister Katherine also suffered problems within her marriage. In her case this occurred during her second marriage, which, as argued elsewhere, was most probably arranged by the Howards in order to place Katherine under control and avoid a repeat performance of her dynastically dangerous rebellion in Wales. Her second husband was Henry, Lord Daubeney, later Earl of Bridgwater, a middle-ranking nobleman whose estates were in Somerset and Dorset, a long way from the royal court and from the Howards' own estates in East Anglia. Katherine was the only one of the five Howard women to marry more than once. She was also the only one whose marriage ended in a formal divorce settlement. The rarity of this cannot be over-stressed. Though there are a

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<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to know how unusual this was. Harris states that after marriage, loyalty to marital families took precedence except in times of conflict; see *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 191-2. Most documentation of marriage disputes does not reveal women's primary loyalties before such conflict; see Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 94-5 and 174-5 on Ladies Powis and Mounteagle.

number of examples of aristocratic couples who suffered marital problems, such as the Oxfords, Norfolks, Northumberlands, Mounteagles, Powises, Parrs, Wyatts and Hungerfords, few of these underwent a formal, legal separation: only the Powises and the Parrs of this selection are definitively known to have done so.<sup>72</sup> Though the Norfolks, Northumberlands, and Wyatts did separate, these were not legal settlements as Katherine's was, and Helmholz has stated that 'The most striking fact about divorce litigation...is how little of it there was.'<sup>73</sup> While studies suggest that noblewomen's divorces were usually facilitated by their natal relatives, we will see that this was not wholly the case for Katherine.

Unfortunately for so unusual a case, the sources for the breaking of this marriage are scarce; we have only two letters and a few tantalising pieces of contemporary gossip to add to a Chancery petition of 1533-8 describing the couple as 'devorcyd and seu'yd from bedde and borde by thorder of the spirituall lawe'.<sup>74</sup>

The breakdown of their marriage is doubly difficult to chart because we do not know exactly when they married. Katherine's first husband, Rhys ap Griffith, was executed on a trumped-up charge of high treason in December 1531.<sup>75</sup> Theoretically, she was free to remarry from this point, but it is unlikely that she did so immediately due to the financial and domestic concerns which undoubtedly followed her sudden widowhood. Though the King had exempted her jointure estates from her husband's act of attainder, she still needed to secure her movable goods and find a place to live.<sup>76</sup> She had certainly left Wales by March 1532, because a letter from the King's official William Brabazon at

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<sup>72</sup> Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, pp. 174-5; James, pp. 199-204.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 3 of this thesis; Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4; Burrow, Sir Thomas Wyatt, *ODNB* [accessed 11 January 2013]; Helmholz, p. 74.

<sup>74</sup> TNA C1/777/16.

<sup>75</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV, (ii), 853. See Chapter 4.

<sup>76</sup> TNA E36/151.

Carew Castle mentions the presence of a chaplain sent by her, indicating that she was not there herself.<sup>77</sup> Her seventeenth-century descendant Henry Rice wrote that she had gone to London, but offers no evidence to support this.<sup>78</sup> In the absence of any concrete evidence it seems probable that they married relatively early in 1532, for their marriage had had time to reach breaking point by 1535.

This marriage was probably not of Katherine's choosing.<sup>79</sup> If this were the case, it seems obvious that it was always going to be difficult for Katherine to identify strongly with the Daubeney family. This is powerfully supported by the chief sources for this episode: one surviving holograph letter written by Katherine to Thomas Cromwell on 10 October 1535, in company with one from her husband sent on the same date.<sup>80</sup> In fact, both letters show that matters had reached an impasse well before this. Daubeney's is the more specific. It shows that a private separation was already under negotiation in October 1535, with Cromwell as chief mediator; Daubeney was using a relative of his mother's, 'cossen arendel', as his go-between to negotiate the amount of alimony he would be expected to pay yearly to Katherine. His letter suggests either that he had made two separate offers previously, or that he had a bad head for figures. He first stated that he had offered 200 marks per year, and then later in the same letter mentions 'myne offer of an hudred poundes yerly'. Both had been rejected by Cromwell. Daubeney pointed out, evidently with some anger, that 'ther ys no man that doythe her of myne offer...but thynkethe that I do bey myn hertes ease very dearly consydering that I haue had no man<sup>er</sup> of commodity bey her', by

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<sup>77</sup> TNA SP1/53, fol. 129. Though calendared as March 1529, this letter must belong to March 1532 as it makes clear that Rhys is now dead.

<sup>78</sup> Rice, pp. 270-77.

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>80</sup> TNA SP1/97, fols. 120, 118.

which he meant that they had had no children and thus that he was heirless.<sup>81</sup>

This suggests matters had been uncongenial for some time.

Katherine's letter sits uneasily alongside her husband's and gives us little concrete information concerning what actually happened between them. The fact that the date of composition is the same for her own and her husband's letters strongly suggests in October 1535 they were still living under the same roof; she must have known that negotiations had stalled and that Daubeney would be writing to Cromwell himself, and chose to send her own petition to counter this. The discord between herself and Daubeney had clearly begun some time ago, because she referred to Cromwell's previous promises of help 'at all tymes whene I was asewter to yow and in spechally whene I came to yowr howese by the fryers in london whene I forst sewyd to yow'.<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, her letter makes no mention of the separation evidently under negotiation. She asked him to 'speke yowr good word whane yow thenke best to the kynges hyghnes for me' because 'my lord my hosbond hathe payd well fore to make frends a gaynst me...fere I most that hys hyghnes showed here of me more than I deserve...my enmyes wull saye the worst'.<sup>83</sup> This may be a guarded reference to their separation and the alimony negotiations. In all, her letter gives little away concerning the specifics of their marriage breakdown. The only thing she makes abundantly clear is the unease of her current situation, and the absence of contextual fact makes this an unhappy read. Katherine is one of the few early modern women who specifically stated that she had used her own hand for the purpose of secrecy:

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<sup>81</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 118.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 120.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 120.

that [which] I have wreten herto yow ys my owen hand wyche ys very yll / I have done the best I cane and rather thene I wold trust enny so fare as to knowe my mynd I had lever yt ware undon / and I desyr yow in as myche as none ys prevy of this letter but my selff and yow that yeff yt be yowr plesyr I praye yow that yt be not sene for thowe I befayer spoken unto yet ame I not all wayes in sewrty & I ame very unsewer as yt now chancheythe.<sup>84</sup>

Even the bearer ‘knowe not what he caryethe’. Her comment that she was not always ‘in sewrty’ suggests that she knew she was being spied upon and her letters read: this was not a happy household.

Though the facts are murky it is evident that Katherine was in a deeply unpleasant situation and that she was very afraid. Her letter shows that Daubeney did not know she was sending it, and that she did not want him to find out, which makes it clear that she was afraid of him. Contemporary opinions of Lord Daubeney chimed with her own. The Lisle family had been litigating against him over lands for many years, and their London agent John Hussey so disliked Daubeney that he said he wished that he might die childless, ‘as I trust he shall do, and that shortly’.<sup>85</sup> Lady Lisle herself spoke wearily of him in 1538: ‘I knowe the Erle of bridwatr[‘s] appetite the mor he ys spokenn unto the warse he wilbe.’<sup>86</sup> When in 1539 it was falsely rumoured that Daubeney was sick and in danger of death, Hussey wrote that ‘the nyws were to good to be trywe’.<sup>87</sup> During the late 1540s Daubeney’s own servant brought a Chancery suit against him for non-payment of debts and unfair dismissal, incidentally complaining that Daubeney had tried to shoot at him with a crossbow.<sup>88</sup> Katherine’s husband was clearly a volatile, violent man disliked by his contemporaries, which suggests she had reason to fear him, and indeed, to desire the end of her marriage.

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<sup>84</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 120.

<sup>85</sup> TNA SP3/12, fol. 15.

<sup>86</sup> TNA SP3/4 fol. 45; TNA SP3/14, fol. 66v.

<sup>87</sup> TNA SP1/142, fol. 132.

<sup>88</sup> TNA C1/1137/44.



Thus she had sued to Cromwell, the King's chief advisor, and representative of state intervention. Immediately this strikes an odd note: in Anne's case, as in most other women's, her natal family, the Howards, had been her first port of call. Having secured their support, they had proceeded together to petition Cardinal Wolsey, who then involved the King and invoked the law. Where were the Howards for Katherine? Her father was dead by this point, but she possessed two living half-brothers, Thomas II, Duke of Norfolk, and Lord Edmund Howard, and two full ones, Lord William Howard and Lord Thomas Howard, as well as her mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, two sisters, and many other members of the extended Howard family. During 1535, all of these except Lord Edmund, who was acting as Controller of Calais, had access to court at some stage; indeed her most influential relative, her half-brother Norfolk, was at court in October 1535 when Katherine wrote her letter.<sup>89</sup>

Her petition does give some clues as to her family's attitude. She wrote that 'I have many kyne and fewe that dothe for me', which does suggest that she had asked some family members for aid, but that this had been refused. She added a caveat: 'I have many kyne and fewe that dothe for me onlese thene the quennes hyghnes wyche I ame very myche bownd unto and yet I do here and perseve as myche as cane be devysyd ys devysyd to compasse yt contenewally to sett her grace to wt drawe here favor frome me'.<sup>90</sup> The evidence does not tell us what help Queen Anne Boleyn, a Howard relative, had given, and it is not clear from this statement whether Katherine thought it was Daubeney poisoning the queen against her, or her own relatives, the Howards. What it does show is that at this time Katherine followed the natural impulse of women in her situation, and

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<sup>89</sup> Head, pp. 125-6.

<sup>90</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 120.

appealed to her natal family for help. Naturally it is difficult to be absolutely certain of all the Howards' responses to Katherine's situation, for there is no private archive of correspondence for the Tudor Howards. Certainly only a few years later she exhibited immensely close ties to her natal relatives, particularly her female kin in the form of her mother, sister, and sister-in-law; this may suggest that they were simply unaware of Katherine's predicament at this time.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, in the Howards' defence it must be noted that Somerset was a long way to travel and Daubeney may not have welcomed them as visitors. Katherine's urgent secrecy over her letter to Cromwell may suggest that it was difficult for her to send or receive letters, which means her family in London may only have had Daubeney's version of events. This was certainly the case for another abused wife during this period; Lady Hungerford, imprisoned in a turret of her husband's castle during the late 1530s, had had difficulty reaching anybody who might help her.<sup>92</sup> As we have seen, the most important natal relative in circumstances of marital difficulty was a woman's father. Katherine's – Thomas I, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk – was dead. But where was his successor, the family patriarch, Katherine's half-brother Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk? It is plausible that members of the family outside of the royal court and London might not have been aware of her situation, but this seems unlikely to have applied to Norfolk, whose position on the King's council gave him unlimited access to court and thus to gossip. Between 1536 and 1539 he was a constant suitor to Wolsey on behalf of his daughter Mary, who was struggling to obtain her jointure from the King following the death of her husband, his illegitimate son. In almost every letter to Cromwell – and there are many – he asked that

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<sup>91</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>92</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 397.

Cromwell ‘be a gode solicytor for my doughters cause’.<sup>93</sup> He had likewise assisted his half-sister Anne, Countess of Oxford, with similar problems. Why did he not do this for Katherine in earlier years?

The answer may lie in the making of this marriage and in Katherine’s previous conduct. As argued elsewhere, it seems likely that this marriage had been made by Norfolk in an attempt to control Katherine after her organisation of rebellion in Wales led to the execution of her first husband and severe embarrassment for the Howards. In this light, it is not surprising that he refused to support Katherine when she began to suffer problems in this marriage, let alone in an attempt to terminate it – this could become yet another public, embarrassing, and potentially violent cause for the Howards. This suggests that once he had married her to Daubeney, Norfolk no longer considered Katherine a member of his dynastic affinity; she was simply too much trouble. Natal identity, then, was not always necessarily understood in the same way by women themselves and their natal families; while for Katherine it endured, for Norfolk, it did not, and this case is a key example of the conflict that occurred as a result.

With no natal support forthcoming, Katherine appears to have had no option but to go directly to Cromwell. Yet even this did not prove sufficient remedy. There are no more letters regarding the couples’ separation or alimony payments after October 1535, which suggests that the negotiations between Daubeney and Cromwell stalled around this point. The next we hear is from George Rolle, a correspondent of Lady Lisle’s, who wrote on 4 March 1536 that ‘he [Daubeney] shalbe now dyvorsyd from my lady by there both assentes & my lady to haue nowe lxxx ponndes yerely & hyr hole joyntour aft hys deth as was

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<sup>93</sup> TNA SP1/115, fol. 80. See also TNA SP1/111, fol. 204; TNA SP1/114, fol. 48; TNA SP1/115 fols. 190, 240; TNA SP1/116, fol. 85; TNA SP1/118, fol. 216; TNA SP1/120, fol. 6; TNA SP1/124, fol. 1.

appoynted the tyme of there furst maryage'.<sup>94</sup> This extraordinary statement is backed up by the Chancery suit of 1533-38 mentioned previously, describing them as 'devorcyd and seu'yd from bedde and borde by thorder of the spirituall lawe'.<sup>95</sup> This was not a common or stock phrase and can only refer to a legal divorce *a mensa et thoro* (from bed and board) obtained from an ecclesiastical court of canon law.<sup>96</sup>

As noted earlier, this was very unusual. The surest way to break a marriage was to obtain an annulment – a decree stating that the marriage had never been valid, which allowed both parties to act as though it had never occurred – but this required considerable evidence and was difficult to obtain. It was equally difficult to achieve anything like a modern-day divorce; the best the law could do was to grant a separation where neither party was permitted to remarry during the life of their spouse, termed a divorce *a mensa et thoro*, from bed and board. This could only be granted by an ecclesiastical court on evidence of adultery, cruelty, or heresy, and the court required substantial proof of any of these. Church courts were far more interested in promoting reconciliation, and had no real means of enforcing their verdicts; hence suits for separation were rare and often unsuccessful.<sup>97</sup> Thus it is astonishing that Katherine and Daubeney attempted this. It also suggests that even Cromwell had his limits. We must remember that he had rejected Daubeney's alimony offer, demonstrating that his sympathies lay with Katherine.<sup>98</sup> Yet he evidently failed to negotiate a mutually pleasing arrangement, and if George Rolle was correct, Katherine ended up in a worse financial situation than that which Cromwell had rejected – Rolle stated

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<sup>94</sup> TNA SP3/9, fol. 36.

<sup>95</sup> TNA C1/777/16.

<sup>96</sup> I am grateful to Professor Tim Stretton for his advice on this.

<sup>97</sup> Helmholz, p. 75.

<sup>98</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 118.

that her yearly alimony was to be £80, not the £100 Daubeney had offered in 1535.<sup>99</sup> It is possible that Cromwell found his influence insufficient without additional support from Katherine's family, the Howards. After all, Cromwell had an enormous number of suits to put before the King and could not give Katherine's case the same level of attention as a family member might have done. This clearly highlights the necessity for noblewomen to continue to foster good relations with their natal families after marriage.

We know that Katherine and Daubeney must have successfully secured a divorce from a church court. Yet how, exactly, did they go about this? Tantalisingly, no direct evidence survives. We do, however, know enough about the process to be able to make some useful observations.<sup>100</sup> Only one party would initiate the supplication to the court; there is no way to know whether it was Katherine or Daubeney, or whether, based on Rolle's comment that it was to be done 'by there both assentes', it was a case of collusion - though technically the law did not permit such arrangements, Helmholz has argued that it did occur.<sup>101</sup> It seems most likely that the case would have been heard by the court in Daubeney's home diocese of Bath and Wells, since that is where the couple lived.<sup>102</sup> Yet Helmholz tells us that cases of separation amongst nobility rarely came to a court hearing as these individuals made the most of their high status and sought sentence privately directly from the bishop. Records of such sentences are usually to be found in the relevant bishop's register, if it

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<sup>99</sup> TNA SP3/9, fol. 36; TNA SP1/97, fol. 118.

<sup>100</sup> See Helmholz, pp. 100-137.

<sup>101</sup> TNA SP3/9, fol. 36; Helmholz, pp. 103-4.

<sup>102</sup> Daubeney's chief estate at this time was South Petherton in Somerset which falls into the Bath and Wells diocese, though he also owned manors within the Salisbury diocese. There is a possibility that given their noble status, they may have used the higher ecclesiastical court in the Diocese of Canterbury, or even the Court of Arches, but records for these do not survive and Bath and Wells seems more likely based on their living arrangements.

survives.<sup>103</sup> The Bishop of Bath and Wells during 1536 was John Clerk and his registers survive almost unbroken.<sup>104</sup> There is no reference to a sentence of separation given to the Daubeney's within them, which suggests they did indeed proceed to a court hearing, though I have found no record of this.

In the interest of uncovering Katherine's role and the implications of her lack of natal support it must be noted that most cases of separation *a mensa et thoro* were brought for cruelty, not adultery, and that even where it was a mutual decision proof would be required.<sup>105</sup> The legal definition of cruelty was something of a sliding scale, taken contextually in every individual case, but divorces were never granted for casual or occasional blows. As Bailey tells us, there had to be proof that at least one party had committed 'repeated, life-threatening acts of physical violence'.<sup>106</sup> Daubeney's proven violence in other areas of his life and Katherine's evident fear in 1535 suggest that it was his cruelty towards her which formed the basis of their suit. This sets their separation in a new and distressing context.

Did the Howards intervene at any point during the divorce suit? Again, there is no evidence for the involvement of any of her natal relatives, including her most influential male relative, her half-brother the Duke of Norfolk, on any level during this time. It is not clear whether he had expected the Howards to gain anything from this marriage. The lack of any surviving marriage agreement means that we do not know the extent of Katherine's jointure lands and makes it

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<sup>103</sup> Helmholz, pp. 160-1.

<sup>104</sup> Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *The registers of Thomas Wolsey, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1518-1523, John Clerke, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1523-1541, William Knyght, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1541-1547, and Gilbert Bourne, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1554-1559*, *Somerset Record Society* 55 (1940).

<sup>105</sup> Helmholz, p. 101.

<sup>106</sup> Bailey, 'Cruelty and Adultery', in *Histories of Crime*, ed. by Kilday and Nash, p. 41; Helmholz, pp. 101-5.

difficult to speculate as to the advantages for her family. The family did not hold any lands near to Daubeney's, and while this in itself may have been a good reason for alliance, Daubeney's finances were known to be in a poor state and cannot have been that attractive to a man as acquisitive as Norfolk. This raises the possibility that quite apart from her embarrassing conduct in Wales in the 1520s, Norfolk may have abandoned Katherine because they simply did not get along. Katherine was a strong character, dominant and gutsy, very different from the popular image of the subordinate, obedient female. In this she was not so different from Norfolk's own wife Elizabeth, with whom he was still at war; recent events regarding the breaking of his own marriage may well have coloured his view of Katherine's. Moreover, Norfolk himself was also domineering and unpleasant, with a streak of brutality that boded ill for any who crossed him.<sup>107</sup> The siblings' similarity may have prevented a positive bond between them. The fact that Norfolk appears to have had a much warmer relationship with Katherine's older sister Anne bears out this theory. For Katherine, the combination of her past conduct, her distant location, and her antagonistic relationship with her half-brother the family patriarch meant that she was left to manage alone.

In fact, the evidence suggests that Norfolk even may have tried to reinstate the marriage several years later in 1540. Due to breach of existing covenants, in July 1540 Daubeney sold lands in Dorset to the Earl of Hertford, *on the advice of the duke of Norfolk*.<sup>108</sup> Why was Katherine's brother still involved in assisting her ex-husband four years after their divorce? This coincides fairly closely with an additional comment from the Lisles' correspondent George

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<sup>107</sup> He personally suggested and oversaw the execution of 200 rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace; see Head, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> TNA E328/285/i.

Rolle; in February 1540 he wrote that Daubeney intended to take back his wife, remitting all past offences.<sup>109</sup> Possibly Norfolk was attempting to orchestrate such a reunion, but if so, the evidence suggests that it did not occur and thus was not what Katherine wanted; in 1542 she was still living in London and had not returned to Somerset and Daubeney.<sup>110</sup> Existing scholarship has shown that this lack of natal support was unusual; throughout Europe, most women's male relatives did move to assist them in times of marital strife.<sup>111</sup> This clearly underlines Norfolk's apparent flexibility in his perception of the Howard women's dynastic identity.

Though she received no apparent aid from any members of the Howard family *per se*, there is evidence to show that in 1536 one member of her extended natal family did come to her assistance. In George Rolle's 1536 letter to Lady Lisle in which he mentions the Daubeney's imminent divorce, he also states that Daubeney had recently borrowed £400 from the Earl of Wiltshire.<sup>112</sup> This was none other than Thomas Boleyn, father of the queen, Norfolk's brother-in-law and Katherine's too. In her discussion of this letter, Muriel St Clare Byrne suggested that this loan had something to do with the Daubeney's divorce and this seems eminently plausible, as court cases were not cheap and Daubeney's finances were not robust.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Katherine had written a year earlier that Queen Anne Boleyn was the only member of her kin who would help her, which suggests that Wiltshire's loan may have been a royal order.<sup>114</sup> This was generous

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<sup>109</sup> TNA SP3/13 fols. 48-48v.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 280; *LP XVIII*, (i), 226 (20).

<sup>111</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 81-2; Amussen, pp. 81-3.

<sup>112</sup> TNA SP3/9, fol. 36.

<sup>113</sup> *Lisle Letters*, IV, pp. 39-40; TNA SP3/9, fol. 36. Rolle also promised to let the Lisles know when Daubeney was next in need of money, implying that it would not be long, and that he would then be more amenable to discussion over the lands in dispute.

<sup>114</sup> TNA SP1/97, fol. 120.



help indeed; without it, the case might have stalled and Katherine might never have escaped from her husband. This clearly shows the necessity for natal intervention, but that this could come from extended family members as well as – or instead of – more immediate relations. It also emphasises the Howard women's major advantage at this point; their female kinship network included a Queen, and the benefits of her political influence far outweighed even those of our women.

Katherine's divorce demonstrates a different scenario to that of her similarly-afflicted sister Anne, and presents another facet of dynastic function and patriarchal authority. As was usual, Katherine approached her natal relatives for assistance when her marriage began to falter. Unusually, however, she did not receive this aid from those relatives closest to her. It is difficult to know what the Howards collectively made of Katherine at this stage. We have no surviving evidence whatsoever regarding her relationship with her female natal relatives such as her mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and her sisters, among them Anne, dowager Countess of Oxford. This is unsurprising, since any correspondence between them would not have made it into the state paper collection, and thus has not survived; there is equally very little evidence of this nature for other women in similar situations.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, if we look to Katherine's future as discussed in Chapter 2, it is clear that her female kin networks remained strong.<sup>116</sup> Thus while there is no evidence that these female natal relatives assisted her during the breakdown of her marriage, there is equally no real evidence to argue that they did not, and this must remain unclear.

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<sup>115</sup> Such as Mary Brandon-Stanley, Lady Monteagle, whose marriage provides a useful comparison for that of Anne, Countess of Oxford. See also that of Mary Talbot-Percy, Countess of Northumberland, whose marriage ran into difficulties during the 1530s and is described in Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*, pp. 153-4.

<sup>116</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 76-7; Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, pp. 280 and 283.

What is clear is that the Howard patriarch Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, Katherine's half-brother, did not help her in this case, and that he considered that she had burnt her bridges to the Howard family with her Welsh rebellion in 1529. This sheds new light on the Howards' intra-familial relations during the trying years of Anne Boleyn's rise and fall, and shows that the dynasty was not wholly unified at this time. Norfolk appears to have thought that she was more trouble than she was worth, and was clearly no longer willing to assist her, regardless of her identity as his half-sister, and as a member of the Howard dynasty. This may suggest that for Norfolk, dynastic identity was conditional on appropriate behaviour. While it is difficult to find other examples of this, it is not wholly unusual; Henry VIII behaved similarly over the secret marriages of his sister Mary to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, in 1514, and his niece Margaret Douglas to Lord Thomas Howard in 1536.<sup>117</sup> Thus it seems that the Howard dynasty placed the same importance on appropriate female behaviour as the royal family did. This in itself implies that aristocratic women could wield significant political influence; their behaviour would scarcely otherwise have been of such concern.

### **Mary: 'to wise for a woman...'**

Mary Howard-Fitzroy, Duchess of Richmond, also struggled to resolve a dispute over her jointure following widowhood in 1536. The youngest of our women, Mary was the only surviving daughter of Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and Elizabeth Stafford-Howard. Whereas the marriages of the other two Howard

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<sup>117</sup> See Harris, 'Power, Profit and Passion: Mary Tudor, Charles Brandon, and the Arranged Marriage in Early Tudor England', *Feminist Studies* 15:1 (1989), 59-88, and Chapter 6.

daughters discussed in this chapter – Anne and Katherine – were arranged during the 1510s while the family were still on the rise, by the time Mary's marriage came under discussion in the late 1520s the family had recovered the dukedom of Norfolk and was set to place a member of their dynasty – Anne Boleyn – onto the throne as Queen of England. Consequently her initial betrothal to John de Vere, Lord Bulbeck, heir of the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford - the same earl who fought with the family over Anne's jointure - was broken when in December 1529 it was suggested that she marry the King's acknowledged son Henry Fitzroy.<sup>118</sup> Both Chapuys and Mary's mother Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, claimed that the queen had secured the match for the family; as Mary was the only one of our three Howard daughters to marry upwards into royalty, this seems plausible.<sup>119</sup> The marriage took place on 25 November 1533, but due to the youth of both parties – Mary was only thirteen – it was left unconsummated and the couple did not cohabit.<sup>120</sup> On 23 July 1536, before they reached an acceptable age for this, Fitzroy died suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving Mary a widow whilst still a virgin at only seventeen years of age.

This was a disaster for the Howards. The Second Succession Act passed in June 1536 had granted the King license to appoint his own heir, and it was widely rumoured that this clause was included specifically to allow him to name his son Fitzroy.<sup>121</sup> This would have made Mary the future Queen of England; his death destroyed this. Moreover, Anne Boleyn had been executed only two months previously and the family were already in the danger zone of disgrace. It was highly unlikely that such an alliance would be possible again, for the King

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<sup>118</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (i), 228 (p. 360).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 460 (p. 762); BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>120</sup> According to a passing reference made by Chapuys: *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1154.

<sup>121</sup> *CSP Spain*, V, (ii), 77 (p. 214).

had no more male children at this point. But more immediate, and more important for Mary, was the question of the financial aspect to widowhood. Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, alleged in 1539 that the family had paid no dowry: 'the kynges grace had neu' a peyny for my lord off rechemond for qwene An gatt the maryage cler for my lorde my husbond when sche dyd favur my lorde my husband'.<sup>122</sup> According to Elizabeth, the King, through the queen, had allotted Mary a jointure, for Elizabeth had 'herd qwene an say yt yff my lorde off rechemond dyd dye yt my dorte schuld haue ... a thosand li a yere to hyr jointr.'<sup>123</sup> Now that Richmond had died, Mary was in line to receive this.

But the fall of Anne Boleyn just prior to Richmond's death had changed a number of things for the Howards. By November 1536 the validity of Mary's marriage had been called into question by the King, who was perhaps unwilling to be reminded of a match arranged by his late Queen, and equally unwilling to pay out such a large sum of money for an alliance which had brought him nothing.<sup>124</sup> A letter written by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of canon law was consulted on the matter in 1538, tells us that the King was claiming that non-consummation of the marriage meant that it was not valid, which meant that he did not owe Mary anything.<sup>125</sup> This was, of course, incorrect: medieval canon law stated that a marriage was valid by mutual consent of both parties, not by consummation, and it is not credible that the King was ignorant of this given his own fairly recent struggle over the status of his first wife, Catherine of Aragon's, marriage to his elder

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<sup>122</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 390-390v.

<sup>124</sup> TNA SP1/111, fol. 204-204v.

<sup>125</sup> TNA SP1/128, fol. 69.

brother Prince Arthur.<sup>126</sup> While disputes over jointure were common - Harris has calculated that 52% of 189 marriage lawsuits concerned jointure rights – disputes over the validity of the marriage in the first place were not.<sup>127</sup> This technically deprived Mary of her title of dowager Duchess of Richmond, reducing her to ‘Lady Mary Howard’ and thereby removing the most visible sign of her marital identity. This was not only problematic for Mary herself, but also for her natal family, because, if she had no jointure, they would have to support her financially and her chances of making another good marriage were greatly reduced, not to mention that they would have lost all the benefit of an acknowledged tie to the royal family. Thus it was in the interests of her natal family to secure recognition of her marital identity, and, probably because of her youth and inexperience, the evidence suggests that they were involved from the beginning, unlike Anne’s case where they had simply supported her own petitions to the state.

The earliest surviving piece of evidence relating to the Howards’ role in this dispute dates from November 1536, four months after Mary was widowed. This was a letter from Mary’s father Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, to Thomas Cromwell, the King’s chief secretary, and its contents show that the matter had already moved to debate by ‘judgs and the kyngs lerned connsell’.<sup>128</sup> However, the council were clearly dragging their feet and thus Norfolk invoked the assistance of Cromwell, ‘refferryng the hole mater to yo<sup>r</sup> accostemed frendly advansment’ and asking him to ensure that the judges and council reached a decision and informed the King ‘before the indyng off this terme’.<sup>129</sup> It appears

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<sup>126</sup> James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 73.

<sup>127</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 52.

<sup>128</sup> TNA SP1/111, fol. 204-204v.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 204-204v.

that barring the delay over the summer, Mary's case followed the most common pattern of mediation: natal relatives followed by – or themselves engineering – state intervention.

Norfolk's letter sheds considerable light on the family's attitude to Mary's dynastic identity, and it also provides valuable insight into the way that women's own understanding of this could affect the family's function. Norfolk made it obvious that he needed recognition of Mary's marital identity in order to provide her with a new one, i.e. to remarry her into another family. He even fretted over the lack of suitable spouses: 'at this tyme ther is neyther lord nor lords son nor other gode inherito<sup>r</sup> in this realme that I can remeber of convenient age to marry her so that in maner I rekon her halff undone'.<sup>130</sup> Without recognition of her status as the King's daughter-in-law, the dowager Duchess of Richmond, and the attached financial benefits, the family would struggle to find any acceptable suitors, for noblemen were attracted to widows for their wealth and rank; 'Lady Mary Howard', even with a dowry, was far less attractive than 'Mary, dowager Duchess of Richmond' with £1000 a year in jointure. But why did Mary need to remarry? There is no evidence that Norfolk's half-sister Anne, Countess of Oxford, ever came under any dynastic pressure to remarry, despite her remaining childbearing years. Indeed, she remained a widow for the rest of her life. One can only assume that Mary's youth and the short length of her first marriage were the deciding factors here. At seventeen, she was young even for a first marriage, and certainly still young enough to come under her father's jurisdiction in this regard. Moreover, the family had not yet gained any tangible benefit from Mary, whereas from Anne they had had control over the estates of

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<sup>130</sup> TNA SP1/111, fol. 204-204v.

the earldom of Oxford for some years. For the Howards, Mary had not yet fulfilled her dynastic duty.

However, there is evidence that Mary herself did not attach such importance to her position as a daughter of the Howard dynasty, for in November 1536 her father, on the brink of departing for the rebellious north, wrote anxiously that ‘I wold not be a litle sory to dep<sup>ar</sup>t to dwell in the north and to leve her behynde me for I am somewhat jalous of her that being out of my company she myght bestowe her selff otherwise then I wold she shuld.’<sup>131</sup> Mary, it seems, was so headstrong that Norfolk feared she might marry a nobody while he was not there to prevent her. His earlier comment that he could think of no man of appropriate age or rank suggests that she would indeed have been throwing herself away on somebody of lower status than the Howards, and this would certainly have constituted abandonment of her dynastic duty. Unfortunately there is no further evidence concerning Mary’s potential choice here, which is probably why the episode has received little scholarly attention – we do not know if she had fallen in love, or even if her threat was an idle one to spur her father into action over her jointure suit. In either case, for a seventeen-year-old noblewoman to contemplate an unauthorised remarriage in the face of her family’s certain fury was an astonishing display of independence.<sup>132</sup> Examples of this are few and far between, but interestingly, include Mary’s own widowed cousin Mary Boleyn, who eloped with William Stafford in 1536.<sup>133</sup> This example

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<sup>131</sup> TNA SP1/111, fols. 204-204v.

<sup>132</sup> See Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 58-9.

<sup>133</sup> Jonathan Hughes, ‘Mary Stafford [née Boleyn; other married name Carey] (c. 1499-1543), royal mistress’, *ODNB* [accessed 22 January 2013]. Others include Frances Kitson, the widowed Lady Fitzwaren, who eloped with her mother’s steward Sir William Barnaby in 1561 (see Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 59); Lady Margaret Douglas, the King’s niece, who married Mary’s half-uncle Lord Thomas Howard without royal permission (TNA E36/120/65); perhaps the best known is Margaret Paston, who married her family’s bailiff Sir Richard Calle in 1469

itself may have exacerbated Norfolk's fear that Mary would do likewise.

Nevertheless it is clear that these were exceptions and not the rule.

This sheds new light onto the dynamics of this branch of the Howard family. It is clear both that Norfolk could not control his daughter, and that he was well aware of this. Moreover, he knew how embarrassing, even damaging, this was to his reputation; his hasty reassurance to Cromwell that 'not w<sup>t</sup>stondyng that unto this tyme it is not possible for a yong woman to handle her selff more discretly then she hath done sithe her husbands dethe' reads as though he was hurriedly back peddling his unorthodox admission. In contrast to her aunt Anne, Countess of Oxford, then, Mary obviously possessed not too much, but too little natal loyalty, since Norfolk was evidently afraid that her sense of dynastic duty was not strong enough to prevent her bestowing the family's resources – their name, influence, land, and wealth – on an undeserving suitor.

However, Mary remained unmarried during her father's campaign in the north. Whether this was because she had never seriously meant it, or because it became apparent that she was a poor prospect without her jointure and title, is unclear. Several months later in January 1537 matters were no further forward, and a surviving letter from Mary to her father again reveals her strength of character – or, to sixteenth-century eyes, obstinate wilfulness. She wrote that all she had received thus far from her father's suit was 'no effect but wordes wyches maketh me thenke the kyngs hyeghnis is not assartayned of my hole...rygth theren'.<sup>134</sup> She asked, as she had 'oftymes' asked before, that her father would 'grante me lewe to com up and sue myne owne caus...[I] do not dowt bewt wrapon the rygthe ther of hes hyeghns shuld be mowed to hawe compasyon on

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(Colin Richmond, 'Paston Family (*per. c.* 1420-1504), gentry', *ODNB* [accessed 22 January 2013].

<sup>134</sup> Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 144.



me'.<sup>135</sup> In short, she did not believe her father had done his best for her, and she thought she would be more successful on her own. She signed herself his 'humble dowther', but as Barbara Harris has argued, 'she was anything but that'.<sup>136</sup> A brief analysis of the structure of her letter supports this statement. Mary's writing was very correct in style, addressing Norfolk 'me were good lord and father', and even describing him as 'suche agood intercesser to the kynges mageste'.<sup>137</sup> However, it seems that this was a front; after calling him a good intercessor, she clearly suggested - albeit indirectly and politely - that he had been precisely the opposite. She also knew very well how to put her case most effectively, calling herself 'unwoorthe desolat widowe', and 'most humble desyereng yowr [Norfolk's] blyssenge'.<sup>138</sup> This is a typical example of a daughter's letter to her father, it is indicative of Mary's understanding of the niceties of dynastic loyalty; she knew how she was supposed to behave towards her father, and her surface manners, if not their substance, reflected this.<sup>139</sup> She clearly wanted to bounce her father into action, not alienate him completely and her letter was carefully judged to produce this effect.

Norfolk was quick to catch Mary's implied accusation and was understandably angered by it, writing to Cromwell shortly afterwards expostulating that 'in all my lif I never comoned w<sup>th</sup> her in any seriouse cause or nowe, and wold not haue thought she had be suche as I fynde her, wich as I think is but to wise for a woman.'<sup>140</sup> Historians such as Beverley Murphy and Jessie Childs have leapt to Norfolk's defence, highlighting Mary's naivety in thinking

<sup>135</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 144.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 144; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 179.

<sup>137</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 144.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 144.

<sup>139</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter Writers*, pp. 176-9.

<sup>140</sup> TNA SP1/114, fol. 48.

that the King was delaying because he did not fully understand the situation, and pointing out that a large proportion of Norfolk's letters to Cromwell throughout 1537 asked him to 'bryng my doghters cause to a gode ende.'<sup>141</sup> It is true that Mary should have known better than to suggest that the King was acting in ignorance; this might suggest that she had deliberately inserted this to provoke a reaction. But concerning her father's involvement she may have had a point. There is indeed a stream of letters from Norfolk to Cromwell asking him to resolve the matter, but only one of these was written before Mary accused her father of laxity in January 1537.<sup>142</sup> The rest all date to a later period, showing that she had indeed produced the desired response. Of course, Norfolk was rightly afraid to anger the King at a time when he and his family were in disgrace, and he had been busy in the north with little time for petitioning.<sup>143</sup> Yet again, however, his horror at her independence suggested that he was afraid he would not be able to control her if it came to a battle of wills, and – perhaps – that Mary knew this and capitalised on it.

For another year he held his ground. But in January 1538 Mary took up the cudgels on her own behalf once more, writing directly to Cromwell to ask him to deliver her supplication to the King, because Norfolk continued to refuse her permission to go to London.<sup>144</sup> This letter was less subtle than her last; she wrote that 'my lorde my father...hath many tymes promised me to be aseut<sup>f</sup> to the kings maiestie for abteignyng of my dower wherof as yet ther hath no good as

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<sup>141</sup> TNA SP1/114, fol. 48; TNA SP1/115, fols. 80, 190, 240; TNA SP1/116, fol. 85; TNA SP1/118, fol. 216; TNA SP1/120, fol. 6; TNA SP1/124, fol. 1. See Murphy, p. 220, and Childs, p. 129.

<sup>142</sup> This is the explanatory letter in which he first asks for Cromwell's aid in November 1536: TNA SP1/111, fol. 204-204v.

<sup>143</sup> TNA SP1/131, fol. 24.

<sup>144</sup> TNA SP1/128, fol. 11.

ete come to me nor I feare me by his menes of longe tyme shall not'.<sup>145</sup> Her lack of faith in her father was now public: so much for dynastic unity, as Mary now seemed determined to distance herself from the Howards. She had consulted with her council and knew that 'my reyghet is parfet good'; nevertheless she was prepared to play by the rules of such a suit and prove her claim to her title and jointure through documentation, though 'ther es bowet one thing as my connsel saye unto me that dothe delay nor come my matier wyche is that I can not haue owte the writtes'.<sup>146</sup> Her reliance on her council for this knowledge reveals her lack of legal experience, but the fact that she purposefully told Cromwell of this impediment shows that she was determined to use all the avenues of help available to her and would no longer rely solely on her natal family for aid. This clearly shows that Mary was comfortable acting autonomously outside patriarchal constraints.

Later that month, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, delivered his own verdict, stating that the marriage was good, and – more pointedly – that 'the same caase is (as I remebr) playnly opened and declared in the kings gracs booke of his own cause of matrimoney', thereby politely accusing the King of hypocrisy.<sup>147</sup> Presumably hearing this, Mary pulled out all the stops. An exhausted Norfolk wrote to Cromwell in 1538 that 'My doughter of Richemond doth contynewally wth wepyng and wayling crye owte on me to have me yeve her licence to ride to London... I am so afrayed that the kings highnes shold not be content with me to bring her uppe, that unto this tyme for all her pitefull lamenting I wolde not grawnt to her desire'.<sup>148</sup> This clearly demonstrates that

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<sup>145</sup> TNA SP1/128, fol. 11.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 11.

<sup>147</sup> TNA SP1/128, fol. 69.

<sup>148</sup> TNA SP1/131, fol. 24.

Mary had upset the entire household – which at this time consisted not only of Norfolk, but also her brother Henry, Earl of Surrey, his wife Frances, and their children, her younger brother Thomas, and Norfolk's mistress – because Norfolk was now so near the end of his tether that he had actually written to Cromwell to ask him to 'feale his gracs mynde, whither I shold displease his maiestie in bringing her uppe or not'.<sup>149</sup> Mary's marital dispute had thus created a far more unpleasant familial situation than either Anne's or Katherine's – the upset caused by her 'wepying and wayling' bears a closer resemblance to the 'braykyng or ffyttinge' between her parents during the early 1530s.<sup>150</sup>

Yet Mary and her father were on the same side: both wanted to secure her title and jointure. I have found no other example of a father and daughter who fell into dispute whilst both striving to secure the daughter's jointure. This may suggest that Mary was desperate to escape her father's household, and wanted individual independence. Norfolk, for his part, was clearly equally keen to get rid of his troublesome daughter. The Howards' dynastic unity was already under strain at this time due to the breakdown of Mary's parents' marriage, the fall of Anne Boleyn, the arrest of Mary's cousin Lord Thomas Howard for secretly marrying the King's niece, and her aunt Katherine's recent divorce. Attempting to rid himself of troublesome female relatives was not a new impulse for Norfolk; he had reacted in precisely the same way to his half-sister Katherine's rebellion in 1531 when, afraid of familial embarrassment, he had concluded that she was simply too much trouble for him to deal with, and had arranged a somewhat unattractive alliance to sever her natal identity and thus keep her out of the family's hair. In 1534 he had sent his equally troublesome wife, Mary's

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<sup>149</sup> Childs, p. 129; TNA SP1/131, fol. 24.

<sup>150</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

mother Elizabeth, to an isolated house in Hertfordshire, again in an attempt to remove her from the Howard family, and we saw that he refused aid to his rebellious sister Katherine during her divorce suit of 1535-6. This suggests that for Norfolk, any woman's claim to Howard identity was conditional on her good behaviour – there was no such thing as 'once a Howard, always a Howard'.

Mary did not make it to London until July 1538, when – after several false starts due to outbreaks of plague – Norfolk finally brought her to court.<sup>151</sup> We know this from a letter written to Cromwell by his agent Ralph Sadler, who was evidently present at the time. He does not specify whether Mary put her suit to the King herself, saying only that Norfolk had 'made a sute and mocyon'.<sup>152</sup> He does state that Mary was at court, so in light of her insistence, it seems likely that she had managed personally to present her suit to the King.<sup>153</sup> However, Norfolk then jeopardised Mary's fight by speaking to the King regarding her remarriage to either one of two contenders. This may not have been all his own idea; Sadler wrote that Norfolk suggested a candidate 'of whom he saied yo<sup>r</sup> lordeship had made a mocyon unto him'.<sup>154</sup> This may have been a factor in Norfolk's acquiescence in Mary's trip to London, as he and Cromwell may already have agreed that her remarriage would provide a neat bypass for the whole problem of her dower rights. Once remarried, Mary would be legally subsumed under her new husband's name and her former marital identity would cease to be of any importance. This reveals that Norfolk had given up hope of Mary ever attaining the right to her former title. More significantly, it suggests that the state held the same attitude; Cromwell and the King were more

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<sup>151</sup> TNA SP1/134, fol. 160.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 160.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 160.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 160.

concerned to end the dispute in a manner convenient to them. The choice of candidate, however, was clearly designed by Norfolk to augment the Howards' political position at this time in an effort to kill two birds with one stone: get rid of his daughter, and gain some advantage in doing so. Sadler's report states that Norfolk suggested two candidates, but that the one 'to whom his herte is most inclyned' was Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of the late Queen and uncle to Prince Edward.<sup>155</sup> Edward's birth had left the Seymours in high favour at court, and as Head has stated, Norfolk clearly saw the 'political necessity' of an alliance with them.<sup>156</sup>

As was probably intended, the King saw remarriage as a convenient way out of his predicament – he would not have to pay, nor acknowledge himself to be in the wrong – and recommended the match to Seymour, ordering Cromwell, through Sadler, to see to it.<sup>157</sup> The tone of Sadler's letter suggests that the marriage was considered virtually a done deal by all concerned, noting that 'his grace [Norfolk] therfore prayeth you [Cromwell] to take yo<sup>r</sup> tyme the soner / So that whilles she [Mary] is there the matier may be entered in suche sorte as the same may the rather take effecte'.<sup>158</sup> What they meant by this was that the marriage should be concluded while Mary was still at court, because she was due to leave within a day or two, which shows that her refusal did not cross their minds. However, we hear no more of this match: the historical record falls silent. Sadler clearly states that the King, Norfolk, and Seymour had all agreed to the alliance, so it must therefore have been Mary who refused it. Though there is no documentation of this, a letter from Norfolk less than a week after her scheduled

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<sup>155</sup> TNA SP1/134, fol. 160.

<sup>156</sup> Head, p. 154.

<sup>157</sup> TNA SP1/134, fol. 160.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 160.

departure from court shows that he was on his way back to his estates, and it has been plausibly suggested by Head that this was surely connected with his daughter's recalcitrance.<sup>159</sup>

This shows more clearly than anything else that Mary was focused not on gaining a new marital identity, but securing her own independence. As a wealthy widow, she would be legally recognised as *femme sole*, able to keep her own household and conduct her own business without the need for a male representative. Though she was evidently keen to leave her father's household, this shows that she did not want to jeopardise her future independence by agreeing to a new marriage, and this shows considerable foresight. However, it was also a remarkably brave decision. Though widows were permitted to refuse matches agreed for them by the King it was rarely done, and those that did were usually older widows with greater experience and thus authority.<sup>160</sup> For Mary to refuse to obey her father, Cromwell, the King, and the rest of society shows how independent she already was.

This paid off; on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1539 Mary received her first jointure grant of twenty-eight manors, with various advowsons, reversions and rents, and monastic properties.<sup>161</sup> Some of these were situated within the honour of Richmond in Norfolk, thus tacitly acknowledging her status as the dowager Duchess of Richmond.<sup>162</sup> In July 1540 she was granted two additional manors in Norfolk, the which grant stated that she had now reached her full jointure amount

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<sup>159</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 165; Head, pp. 154-5.

<sup>160</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 160-2. Harris advances the example of Anne Savage-Berkeley, Lady Berkeley, who was widowed at the age of c. 38 in 1534; Cecily Lady Dudley, Dorothy Lady Mountjoy, and Thomas Wriothesley all petitioned for her marriage to their relation Edward Sutton, which she refused without repercussions.

<sup>161</sup> *LP* XIV (i), p. 595.

<sup>162</sup> Murphy, p. 227.

of £744 10s 9d *ob.*<sup>163</sup> However, it has been pointed out that the King's eventual capitulation was not due to Mary's own tenacity, but to the renewal of the Howards' favour during 1539. David Head has shown that early in 1539 there was considerable fear that Catholic Europe would unite and invade England in the wake of the Exeter Conspiracy and Henry's excommunication, and that Norfolk's military expertise was subsequently in demand.<sup>164</sup> The fact that he was granted several parcels of monastic lands at the same time as Mary received her first jointure grant supports this argument. Try as Norfolk and Mary might, the world continued to understand Mary as a member of the Howard dynasty first and foremost.

For Mary, then, neither natal nor marital identity was of paramount importance; she had her sights set on her own personal, individual, identity and independence and in this she was ahead of her time. Her natal relatives – the Howards – and her marital identity – as Duchess of Richmond – were only important to her insofar as they were tools to help her achieve this. Her single-minded pursuit of independence meant that she came into conflict with her father the Duke of Norfolk as she deployed every weapon in a woman's arsenal, from written provocation to 'wepyng and wayling', to spur him to greater efforts on her own behalf. This adds considerably to the picture already developed within this thesis of the intractability of the Howard women. The Howards' dynastic unity, already strained, now shattered under the pressure of Mary's behaviour, despite the fact that she and Norfolk were initially working for the same end. Norfolk came to group Mary with her mother and her aunt, the other Howard

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<sup>163</sup> *LP* XV, 1032 (p. 540); TNA SC12/23/40. There is a discrepancy over this: Mary's mother stated that her jointure was worth £1000, a third more than 1000 marks, but evidently the latter amount was the one eventually agreed upon.

<sup>164</sup> Head, pp. 156-8.



women whom he had physically removed from the family because their behaviour was dynastically damaging. This suggests an alternative understanding of women's dynastic position: for Norfolk, even a blood tie to the Howard dynasty was not necessarily permanent or irrevocable, but conditional on appropriate behaviour and display of loyalty. This arguably reveals these women's potential for significant political influence. The reactions of outsiders to Mary's predicament, however, suggest that this view was unique to him. The way that her eventual grants were dependent upon a resurgence in Howard favour shows that for the King and his advisers, Mary always had been and always would be a member of the Howard dynasty. This shows that the triangular relationship between women, their families, and the state could be one of strain and unease.

Furthermore, Mary never got her wish for independence. The evidence does not tell us whether her yearly jointure payments were kept up, but it is clear that she found herself in increasingly straitened financial circumstances, for she continually sold lands throughout the 1540s and her coffers were described in 1546 as 'soo bare as your maiestie wolde hardlie think her juells suche as she hadd solde or [given] to gage to paie her debtes'.<sup>165</sup> She was forced to remain living within her father's household at Kenninghall and it is clear that she would have been financially better off if she had remarried. However, despite her apparent desire for independence and disregard for her natal identity, Mary proved more loyal, more useful, and indeed, more integral to the continuance of the Howard dynasty than any of the other women of this study. Clearly relationships within the family could change across time. After her father's arrest

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<sup>165</sup> *LP* XIX (ii), 690; *LP* XX (i), 624 (15); *LP* XXI (i), 1383 (110); TNA SP1/227, fol. 84.

and her brother's execution in 1547 – commonly referred to collectively as 'the fall of the Howards' – Mary took custody of her brother's four children, the rising generation of the dynasty, and brought them up single-handedly at Kenninghall throughout Edward VI's reign. She turned the full force of her determination onto the government, petitioning them many times for the children's maintenance, for better conditions for her father, and for his release from the Tower, and her dynastic efforts were recognised in her father's will by a bequest of £500.<sup>166</sup> In her case, therefore, one could certainly argue that born a Howard, she remained a Howard – even if this was not her original design. Though women could successfully resist patriarchal authority for a time, this case shows that they were unable to break free of the generically patriarchal mode of early modern society: even aristocratic women close to the Crown were subject to societal pressures and expectations.

## Conclusion

By tackling head-on the concept of dynastic identity implicit in scholarship on early modern women, this chapter makes important observations on women's dynastic participation, the central aspect of this thesis. These three cases of marriage dispute have made it clear that the attitudes of the Howard women, their families, and the state towards their dynastic loyalties did not always match, and that this could cause additional conflicts. In all cases it is clear that the Howard women do follow the pattern identified by numerous historians of applying to their natal kin for help when their marriages were in trouble. Given the pre-eminence of the Howard dynasty during most of this period, it is not surprising

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<sup>166</sup> TNA SP10/13, fol. 22; TNA SP10/14, fols. 45, 53; TNA PROB 11/37/191.

that the men of the family were considered suitable leverage against all the Howard women's intractable husbands.

The attitude of the Howards to their daughters' marital problems is less clear because the surviving evidence rarely allows us an insight into individual members' relationships with these women. However, these cases do show that there was no discernable 'party line' for the Howards regarding natal support in cases of marriage dispute, and this is an important insight into the concept of 'family strategy'. In theory, the most influential source of help for all three women was Thomas II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, half-brother to Anne and Katherine and father to Mary; this is not surprising given both his political influence and his position as the Howard family patriarch. However, there is an anomaly here, for Norfolk was very assiduous on his half-sister Anne's behalf, and to an extent for his independent daughter Mary, but not at all for his rebellious half-sister Katherine. This strongly suggests that Norfolk's understanding of the help that the women could expect from him was conditional on their behaviour: when they proved too troublesome and potentially damaging to his and the family's reputation, he removed his support. This underlines the unusual nature of the Howards' personal relationships and thus familial operation; while Norfolk's tendency to sever ties to Howard daughters was unusual, so were their levels of independent action verging on rebellion, and in this context Norfolk does not appear to have acted unduly harshly. The family's centrality to politics is highlighted here, as Norfolk's actions suggest he was hyper-aware of the potential impact of women's actions on the way that the dynasty was perceived and treated by those in higher positions of authority.

Nevertheless, Norfolk's opinion did not appear to affect the actions of the rest of the Howard family towards these troublesome daughters, for we saw that both extended family members and female kin continued to offer their support. The state, too, either in the form of the King's advisers or the law, continued to view these women as members of the Howard dynasty, though it is clear from Katherine's case that intermediaries like Cromwell struggled to achieve successful mediation without the positive reinforcement of a woman's natal family.

These marital disputes also shed some light on women's dynastic loyalties outside of these periods of conflict. It is clear that there was indeed some sense of 'once a Howard, always a Howard' for some of these women, revealed not only by their unanimous appeal to their Howard relatives during their marital disputes, but in Anne's case particularly, by their actions earlier on in their marriages. It is interesting that their breaches with the family patriarch - Norfolk - did not appear to affect relations with the rest of the family, and this suggests that Norfolk's word was far from law among the Howard women. Clearly, their loyalty was not to him, but to the family as a whole, and this adds to this thesis's existing impression of the flexibility of familial patriarchal authority. It is difficult to speculate as to why these ties remained so important to the Howard daughters but this chapter makes it possible to argue that, in certain cases, their natal identity was based largely around female kinship networks, since both Anne and Katherine exhibited strong ties to their mother, to each other, and to other female kin during these disputes and throughout the rest of their lives. This emphasis may help to explain the apparent disregard for patriarchal authority demonstrated by most of the five women of this study

during this period; and this marks the Howard women as unusual dynastic subjects.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Treason: In the Shadow of the Crown**

For the nobility during the early sixteenth century, accusations of and convictions for high treason were an unavoidable facet of political existence. Henry VIII's reign saw a considerable number of treason cases, one of which we have already discussed in Chapter 4; the execution of Rhys ap Griffith (husband of Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater) in 1531 for conspiracy to take the throne.<sup>1</sup> This chapter allows us to revisit some of the themes from Chapter 4, such as women stepping outside traditional gender boundaries and the paradox facing the government in trying to deal with this without acknowledging their defiance of the patriarchal order. This chapter therefore adds to our discussion of the exercise of patriarchal authority within families, and within aristocratic society more generally. However, Katherine's own actions were never officially construed as treason. Moreover, Katherine deliberately chose to become involved in overt rebellion, which was not true of the women in the treason cases discussed here. This might suggest a fundamental difference between women's involvement in rebellion and treason, and is why the two have been considered separately.

John Bellamy has stated that Henry's reign is particularly crucial regarding the study of treason law because, as we will see, both the Reformation and the King's propensity for changing wives caused a large number of important statutory developments in the definition and scope of treason.<sup>2</sup> Several Howard women were involved in three of the reign's most high-profile treason

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4. Other notable examples include the fall of the Duke of Buckingham on a similar charge in 1521, the case of Elizabeth Barton, the 'nun of Kent', in 1534, the so-called Exeter Conspiracy of 1539, and, of course, the infamous treasons of the two Howard Queens, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, in 1536 and 1542 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Bellamy, pp. 12-22.

cases, including those which led directly to new legislation. Mary, Duchess of Richmond, was among Anne Boleyn's ladies-in-waiting at the time of her fall in 1536, and was swiftly embroiled in the treason and attainder of her half-uncle Lord Thomas Howard in the same year. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, alongside several other Howard women, were deeply involved the rise and fall of Agnes' granddaughter Queen Catherine Howard in 1541-2. These women, therefore, directly contributed to changes in Tudor law during this period. This chapter is unique in discussing these cases from a female perspective, thus adding an entirely new dimension to our understanding of some of the most significant events of Henry's reign. Expanding the narrative in this way allows further discussion of the way that aristocratic families functioned in times of crisis, and highlights the political significance of women's actions.

It is true that the Howards were not the only women involved in treason during Henry VIII's reign. There were many aristocratic women involved in the case of the nun of Kent in 1534, such as Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, Gertrude Blount-Courtenay, Marchioness of Exeter, Lady Anne Hussey, and Lady Mary Kingston.<sup>3</sup> Several of these were also involved in other treasons. Lady Anne Hussey, for instance, came within an ace of a treason conviction in 1536 for continuing to refer to Princess Mary as 'Princess' rather than 'Lady'.<sup>4</sup> Most treason cases, however, did not involve more than one woman from any given family. The exception to this – and the best comparison for the Howards – was the Pole family during the Exeter Conspiracy of 1538-9.<sup>5</sup> Margaret Pole, *suo jure* Countess of Salisbury, was executed for high treason in 1541 in the

<sup>3</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, p. 446.

<sup>4</sup> BL Cotton MS Otho C X, fol. 254.

<sup>5</sup> See Dodds and Dodds, I, pp. 297-328; Pierce, pp. 115-40.

aftermath of the Exeter Conspiracy, an alleged attempt to depose the King in favour of Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, with the assistance of Reginald Pole, Margaret's son then in exile on the continent. Her sons Henry, Lord Montagu, and Sir Geoffrey Pole were also executed. However, neither of Lady Margaret's daughters, nor her daughters-in-law, were imprisoned, attainted or executed, which means that the Howards remain the only family to have had a number of female members implicated in the same case of treason.

Though most of the treason cases in which they were involved have received considerable scholarly attention, the role of the Howard women has never formed the focus of any study. Instead, historians have been concerned with unravelling factual detail, or analysing these events in the context of religious change, legal changes, the King's marital career, or the role of prophecy.<sup>6</sup> Sharon Jansen's study of women and popular resistance to Henry VIII's reforms is perhaps the only work to take women as its focus. However, she is chiefly concerned with little-known cases of treason involving women of the lower orders.<sup>7</sup> Focusing on aristocratic women allows us to uncover the role that they played in these cases, and to comment on their political agency and the collective behaviour of the Howard family at times of crisis. How important were the women to the family's fortunes in the context of treason cases, and how does this change the existing, male-dominated, picture?

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<sup>6</sup> Such as Mary Polito, *Governmental Arts in Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), Ch. 4, pp. 109-30; Greg Walker, 'Rethinking the Fall of Anne Boleyn', *Historical Journal* 45 (2002), 1-29; Head, "'Beyng Ledde and Seduced by the Devyll'", pp. 3-16; Smith, *Catherine Howard*; Karen Cunningham, *Imaginary Betrayals: Subjectivity and the Discourses of Treason in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). For a fuller discussion of the historiography of these individual cases, see the relevant subsections of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Jansen, *Dangerous Talk and Strange Behaviour*.



A brief overview of the changes to treason law during this period is necessary in order to set these cases in context. John Bellamy's study of the Tudor law of treason remains the standard work, alongside Elton's *Policy and Police* and a number of important articles concerning parliamentary attainder.<sup>8</sup> Bellamy explains that the number of changes to the treason law during Henry's reign was a natural result of the royal supremacy and the King's marriages. At the beginning of his reign the basic definition of treason rested on the Statute of 1352 and was restricted to offences against King's person and his throne, most infamously 'compassing or imagining' the death of the King, his Queen, or the royal heir; violating his female relatives; levying war against him or joining his enemies in doing so; counterfeiting the great seal or coin; and killing the chancellor, treasurer, or a justice of any bench while he was exercising his office. This remained the basic definition for much of Henry VIII's reign, but the events of this reign caused the law to change regarding the scope and consequences of treason. The first of these was the First Succession Act of 1534, which made it high treason to slander the Boleyn marriage or the new succession in writing, and misprision to do so by word only.<sup>9</sup> This was closely followed by the 1534 Treason Act, which was the first major revision of the treason law since the statute of 1352. This Act focused on treason by word only, and made it high

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<sup>8</sup> Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason*; G. Elton, *Policy and Police: the Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972). See also Lacey Baldwin Smith, 'English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth-Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15 (1954), 471-98; G. R. Elton, 'The Law of Treason in the Early Reformation', *Historical Journal* 11 (1968), 211-236; Steven G. Ellis, 'Henry VIII, Rebellion, and the Rule of Law', *Historical Journal* 24 (1981), 513-31; E. Kay Harris, 'Censoring Disobedient Subjects: Narratives of Treason and Royal Authority in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe* ed. by Douglas L. Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 211-234. On attainder, see Donald Somervell, 'Acts of Attainder', *Law Quarterly Review* 66:267 (1951), 306-13, S. E. Lehmborg, 'Parliamentary Attainder in the Reign of Henry VIII, 1536-1547', *Historical Journal* 18 (1975), 675-702, and William Stacy, 'Richard Roose and the Use of Parliamentary Attainder in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Historical Journal* 29 (1986), 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 471-4.

treason, rather than misprision, to slander the Boleyn marriage or succession in speech. This emphasis on treason by word was further applied to all previous treasons, such as thinking, talking of, or attempting the harm of the King, his consort or his heirs, or seeking to deprive them of their titles. This Act also rendered it high treason to slander the King as a heretic or schismatic, and broadened the consequences for high treason by changing the law regarding forfeiture.<sup>10</sup> This rendered forfeiture of all lands a standard procedure following a conviction for treason, thus impacting directly on the entire family and succession of convicted traitors.

The next Act to alter the treason law was the Second Succession Act of 1536, which made it treason to refuse to answer questions during a pre-trial examination, and to talk against the new, revised succession prioritising the claim of the newborn Prince Edward.<sup>11</sup> This was closely followed by the 1536 Act of Supremacy, which made it high treason to refuse to take the new Oath of Supremacy.<sup>12</sup> Yet another important change to the treason law occurred in 1536 through the attainder of Lord Thomas Howard, a case in which Mary Howard-Fitzroy, Duchess of Richmond, was involved and one which is discussed in this chapter.<sup>13</sup> The case was unusual in that the attainder itself contained a clause to alter the law. Lord Thomas had been convicted of high treason for marrying the King's niece, Lady Margaret Douglas, without royal permission; his attainder contained a clause to ensure that in future, anybody who married a female

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<sup>10</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 508-9. Before this time, the King would need to apply to parliament to pass an act of attainder in order to acquire the lands and possessions of a traitor convicted of high treason at common law. However, as Geoffrey Elton pointed out, not only was this time-consuming, it was also clumsy in cases where the attainder was later reversed, since the King would necessarily have to apply to parliament again in order to do this. (Elton, p. 275).

<sup>11</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 655-62. It has been argued that this was a response to Thomas More's refusal to answer pre-trial questioning in 1535; see Bellamy, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 663-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 680-1.

relative of the King's without permission would be guilty of high treason, and the woman concerned would suffer the same penalty. The last significant alteration to the treason law during Henry's reign was the attainder of Queen Catherine Howard in 1542, which operated in like manner to Lord Thomas Howard's attainder. It stated that in future, a woman who married the King without confessing previous unchastity, and a Queen who committed adultery, would be guilty of high treason, and anybody who knew of these things and concealed them would be guilty of misprision.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that it became both easier and more damaging to be convicted for high treason and misprision of treason as the reign of Henry VIII wore on. We can also see that many of the newly-treasonable crimes were those revolving around the actions of various Queens and changes in succession: unchastity, adultery, marrying without permission, and slander. These were all crimes traditionally associated with women.<sup>15</sup> Never before had these been considered suitable subjects for treason legislation; never before had not one, but two Queens been executed for high treason. Before the sixteenth century only one Queen, Joan of Navarre, had ever been convicted of high treason. This was for attempting to compass the death of King Henry V through witchcraft in 1419, again predominantly a female crime, and she was not executed.<sup>16</sup> By the middle of the fifteenth-century things had changed somewhat; Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester's treasonable astrologies necessitated a new statute rendering peeresses judicable by the Lords and judges, and she was tried, convicted, and

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<sup>14</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 857-9.

<sup>15</sup> As we saw in Chapters 3 and 5 in discussion of the breakdown of marriage during this period.

<sup>16</sup> A. R. Myers, 'The Captivity of a Royal Witch: The Household Accounts of Queen Joan of Navarre, 1419-21', in *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, ed. by A. R. Myers (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985), pp. 93-134.

kept under isolated house arrest for the rest of her life.<sup>17</sup> By the middle of Henry VIII's reign, it was possible to try, convict, attain and execute Queens and peeresses. Not only does this demonstrate the growth of sovereign absolutism, as argued by Mary Polito, but it also suggests that women were beginning to be considered a threat to the Crown.<sup>18</sup> This demonstrates the need to consider treason through a gendered prism, and the Howards provide ample opportunities to do so.

### **“Seduced by the devyll”: Treasons of the 1530s**

The first treason case to touch the entire Howard family was the fall of Anne Boleyn in 1536. Anne Boleyn was a member of the extended Howard dynasty by virtue of her mother, Elizabeth Howard-Boleyn, who was the sister of Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk.<sup>19</sup> Her case could not help but be a family concern. It is particularly relevant to the study of the Howard women because Mary, Duchess of Richmond, daughter of Norfolk, was among Anne Boleyn's ladies in waiting at the time of her fall.<sup>20</sup> However, no women were convicted or attainted alongside the Queen, and there is no evidence that women played any part in the investigation. Why was this, and can the surviving evidence shed any light on the whereabouts of Mary and the rest of the Howard women?

Anne Boleyn's fall has received an enormous amount of scholarly attention. Debate over her innocence or guilt has continued unabated, most

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<sup>17</sup> R. A. Griffiths, 'The Trial of Eleanor Cobham: An Episode in the Fall of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester* 51 (1968-9), 381-99; G. L. Harriss, 'Eleanor [née Eleanor Cobham], duchess of Gloucester (c. 1400-1452), *alleged sorcerer*', *ODNB* [accessed 28 January 2013].

<sup>18</sup> Polito, pp. 109-10.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>20</sup> Murphy, 'Mary Fitzroy [née Howard], duchess of Richmond', *ODNB* [accessed 23 September 2011].

notably between Eric Ives and George Bernard.<sup>21</sup> The role of women in the trial has formed a small part of this debate; while Bernard stated that the women of Anne's privy chamber could easily have connived in her affairs, thus pointing to her guilt, Ives argues that this would not have been a simple matter, and that the fact that no woman was accused with Anne suggests that the charge was fabricated.<sup>22</sup> While Bernard assumes that the Anne's ladies would have been questioned and that the depositions simply have not survived, Ives appears to doubt this, noting only the few known pieces of evidence given by women connected to Anne.<sup>23</sup> Mary, Duchess of Richmond, is not mentioned by name in any existing analysis of Anne's fall, yet we know that she was there. It is highly unlikely that she managed to leave the court and London for her family's home in Norfolk either before or during the scandal, because the record states that she did not depart until the death of her husband less than two months later.<sup>24</sup> What, then, do we know about the involvement of women in the fall of Anne Boleyn?

There are no surviving legal records of the trials, and the information gathered in support of the charges is also lost. We can be reasonably certain that investigations were made and depositions recorded in writing; as we shall see, this was certainly the case for Catherine Howard's women five years later. The majority of our knowledge of these events comes from other contemporary sources, which furnish us with only five names of women who featured in this case. According to John Hussey, court agent of Lord and Lady Lisle, Anne's

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<sup>21</sup> G. W. Bernard, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn', *EHR* 106:420 (1991), 584-610; E. W. Ives, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn Reconsidered', *EHR* 107:424 (1992), 651-664; Bernard, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn: A Rejoinder', *EHR* 107 (1992), 665-74; Greg Walker, 'Rethinking the Fall of Anne Boleyn', *Historical Journal* 45 (2002), 1-29; Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*; Bernard, *Anne Boleyn*.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn', pp. 599-600; Ives, 'Reconsidered', pp. 652-3.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard, pp. 599-600, and Ives, pp. 652-3.

<sup>24</sup> *LP* XI, 163 (p. 71).

adulteries came to light through the accusations of Lady Worcester, ‘Nan’ Cobham ‘and one maid other’.<sup>25</sup> Sir John Spelman, a judge present at the trial, wrote that the posthumous words of Lady Wingfield had helped to condemn Anne.<sup>26</sup> Jane, Lady Rochford, wife of George Boleyn, was also rumoured to have provided testimony concerning the incestuous relationship between her husband and the Queen, and of their discussions of the King’s impotence.<sup>27</sup> It has also been argued that Margery Horsman, one of Anne’s maids, gave evidence against her; Edward Baynton, the Queen’s vice-chamberlain, wrote that ‘it cannot be but that she must be of council therewith; there hath been great friendship between the Queen and her of late.’<sup>28</sup>

Lancelot de Carles, secretary to the French ambassador Antoine de Castelnau, bishop of Tarbes, and present in England at the time of Anne’s trial, wrote a metrical poem on Anne’s death in which Lady Worcester’s role is explained.<sup>29</sup> During a quarrel with her brother, Sir Anthony Browne, in which he accused of her loose living evidenced by her pregnancy, Lady Worcester retorted that she was not the only one guilty of such behaviour, and related worse of the Queen. This was taken up and investigated. De Carles emphasises that she did not mean to implicate her mistress and friend. This is supported by a report of Tower constable Sir William Kingston. Whilst awaiting trial, Anne Boleyn apparently lamented the poor mental state of Lady Worcester, whose unborn

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<sup>25</sup> The identity of Anne or ‘Nan’ Cobham has puzzled historians, since the most obvious woman to bear this name was Anne Brooke, Lady Cobham, and it has been thought unlikely that a man of Hussey’s station would use the diminutive ‘Nan’ to describe a woman of significantly higher status than himself. However, the New Year gift list of 1534 (TNA E101/421/13) contains a ‘Mistress Cobham’ among the gentlewomen who received gifts from the king and it seems likely that Anne Cobham was in fact a relatively lowly member of Anne’s privy chamber.

<sup>26</sup> *Spelman’s Reports*, I, p. 71.

<sup>27</sup> *LP X*, 908.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 799.

<sup>29</sup> Lancelot de Carles, ‘Poème sur la mort d’Anne Boleyn’, in *La Grande Bretagne devant l’Opinion Française*, ed. by Georges Ascoli (Paris, 1927).

baby had not stirred since Anne's arrest.<sup>30</sup> The evidence of the other women who were involved is somewhat bizarre, particularly that of Lady Wingfield. Judge Spelman stated that evidence from the words of Lady Wingfield - commonly taken to be Bridget Wingfield, widow of Sir Richard - was used, because she had spoken of Anne's indiscretions shortly before her death. We know that this occurred some time after 1534.<sup>31</sup> Why use the evidence of a dead woman when surely, if Anne was guilty, there were several alive who could have given more up-to-date revelations?

It does not appear, then, that Mary Howard-Fitzroy, Duchess of Richmond, was among Anne's most memorable accusers, but it seems likely that she was questioned and that her statement has not survived. It is probable that Mary knew whether or not Anne was guilty. If Lady Worcester apparently knew of Anne's affairs, it stands to reason that others among her maids did too. It has been suggested that Anne's women turned 'King's evidence' and thereby were spared any unpleasant consequences.<sup>32</sup> It is likely that they did so, but why, then, does it appear that their evidence was not used in the trial?

This is probably an unsolvable dilemma and debate will doubtless continue. We might, however, usefully remember that the state of the treason law at this point in 1536 meant that Anne's women, including Mary, were not actually at risk of any legal consequences for having known of Anne's affairs, because her adultery was not itself treason. Anne was convicted on a charge of imagining the death of the King by discussing his impotence with her brother, George Boleyn, Viscount Rochford. To be guilty of misprision of treason,

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<sup>30</sup> *LP X*, 793.

<sup>31</sup> *Spelman's Reports*, I, p. 71. Lady Wingfield is mentioned in the New Year gift list for 1534: TNA E101/421/13.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 158.

Anne's women would have to have known of, and concealed, what was probably a private conversation. Anne's women therefore stood in no danger. They had no reason to go out of their way to accuse the Queen and provide evidence for the trial. Interestingly, the Second Succession Act of 1536, introduced and passed shortly after Anne's execution, included a clause rendering it treasonable to refuse to answer a pre-trial examination.<sup>33</sup> Scholars have assumed that this was due to Thomas More's infamous refusal to answer questions, but could it also relate to Anne's women?<sup>34</sup>

It would be easy to argue that Mary herself stood in little danger because she was the daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, and as Jansen has shown, aristocratic noblewomen with such connections usually managed to escape official consequences for their behaviour.<sup>35</sup> However, Norfolk's position was even more precarious than his daughter's. As the family patriarch who had supported the match throughout, he stood to lose the favour and protection of the King. That this did not happen was because he made his loyalty to the Crown clear by condemning his niece and her alleged lovers.<sup>36</sup> It would also be easy to suggest that contemporaries simply attached no value to women's testimony. It is true that diplomatic or ambassadorial correspondence rarely acknowledges women as a source of information during this period.<sup>37</sup> Yet Sharon Jansen's wealth of examples of women's words construed as treason and taken very seriously indeed by the government strongly suggests that women's testimony was not disregarded.

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<sup>33</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 655-62.

<sup>34</sup> Bellamy, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Jansen, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, I, pp. 36-7.

<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Dr Catherine Fletcher for her advice in this regard.



This analysis has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered. However, it is possible to suggest that if the clause in the 1536 Second Succession Act concerning refusal to answer a pre-trial examination really did reflect the uncooperative behaviour of Anne's ladies-in-waiting, then this was the first instance whereby noblewomen directly altered the treason law. As such, it was a case of enormous importance for the future role of women in legal cases with political significance. It is equally significant that Mary, duchess of Richmond, was involved.

In terms of the role of the family, however, it is difficult to establish a clear picture of any collective Howard strategy occurring as a result of the fall of Anne Boleyn. This is not necessarily surprising; evidence of a clear 'family strategy' is not likely to have been recorded unless such a thing was discovered by investigators, and the lack of precedent for Anne Boleyn's case means that there are few comparative examples to draw upon. There is, however, some evidence both from the Howards in the fall of Catherine Howard 1541-2, which will be considered later, and from the Pole family during the time of the Exeter Conspiracy in the late 1530s to suggest that such strategies did exist and family counsel was taken in such situations. Madeleine and Ruth Dodds point out that in May or June 1538, brothers Henry, Lord Montagu, and Sir Geoffrey Pole discussed what they should do about the government's discovery of letters the two men had exchanged with their exiled brother Reginald.<sup>38</sup> Montagu stated that he had burnt all his letters. Sir Geoffrey had not done this. He immediately sent a messenger to his wife, Lady Constance Pole, with a ring as a token. Lady Constance evidently knew exactly what this signified and promptly burnt all the

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<sup>38</sup> Dodds and Dodds, II, pp. 304-5. See also Pierce, pp. 116-7.

letters she could find in her husband's closet.<sup>39</sup> This is a clear instance of family conference followed by wider family action and suggests that families could and did band together and formulate strategies for their defence during this period.

There are no letters surviving from any Howard family members relating to Anne Boleyn's fall and we do not even know the precise whereabouts of most of the Howard women of this study at this time. It seems likely that Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, was based in Horsham, Sussex, at this point, since we know that she moved her household from there to Lambeth towards the end of 1536. Anne, dowager Countess of Oxford, was based in Cambridgeshire; Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, was still under house arrest in Hertfordshire; Katherine, later Countess of Bridgewater, had recently undergone a divorce, and her whereabouts are uncertain.<sup>40</sup> For the Duke of Norfolk, there was an imperative need to demonstrate loyalty to the King, and as ever, he did so. According to the chronicler Wriothesley, Norfolk was among the officials who brought Anne to the Tower on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. He headed the trial of peers and pronounced his own niece guilty and his son and heir, Henry, sat at his feet throughout.<sup>41</sup> Anne's own family likewise rallied to the side of the crown.<sup>42</sup> We cannot tell whether the women took part in Norfolk's overt display of loyalty, or whether they simply stayed away from court until the storm had passed. That there is no evidence of collective action probably indicates that they did not come under suspicion. This may be due to Norfolk's swift action in condemning

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<sup>39</sup> Dodds and Dodds, II, p. 305.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>41</sup> Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, I, pp. 36-7.

<sup>42</sup> Anne's father, the earl of Wiltshire, was among the peers who convicted the men, though he did not sit on the jury to convict the Queen; her aunt, Lady Boleyn, accompanied her to the Tower, undoubtedly chosen as a 'safe' guard.

his niece and, perhaps, to Mary's possible testimony against her aunt. This itself may have formed something of a family strategy, if unintended and unrecorded.

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A month had barely passed before Mary became involved with the treason laws yet again. In July 1536 an affair and contract of marriage was discovered to exist between Mary's cousin Lord Thomas Howard and her close friend Lady Margaret Douglas, the King's niece. It is not clear how this was discovered.<sup>43</sup> This is perhaps why the event has received little specific scholarly attention.<sup>44</sup> The investigation found that they had 'loved' for a year, and had been contracted since Easter 1536.<sup>45</sup> Following discovery, Lord Thomas and Lady Margaret were imprisoned in the Tower, and Lord Thomas was attainted for high treason and sentenced to death. This was a severe punishment for a crime which was not legally treason.<sup>46</sup> Lady Margaret remained within the Tower until November 1536, when she was moved to Syon Abbey.<sup>47</sup> Lord Thomas was never executed, but died in the Tower in October 1537, two days after Lady Margaret's eventual release.<sup>48</sup>

Significantly, Mary, Duchess of Richmond, had known about their affair and marriage since its inception. The majority of the evidence for this case comes from the small number of depositions taken by the King's councillors. The deposition of Thomas Smyth, a servant of Howard's, states that Howard 'wold

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<sup>43</sup> TNA E36/120/65; *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 680-1.

<sup>44</sup> The only study specifically of Howard's attainder is Head, "'Beyng Ledde and Seduced by the Devyll'", pp. 3-16.

<sup>45</sup> TNA E36/120/65.

<sup>46</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 680-1.

<sup>47</sup> TNA SP1/110, fol. 186.

<sup>48</sup> TNA SP1/126, fol. 48.

watche tyl my lady bulleyn was goon and thenn stele in to her [Lady Margaret's] chambre' while Mary was present.<sup>49</sup> Mary had therefore acted as the couple's accomplice and chaperone. By rights, she ought to have joined the pair in an attainer for misprision of treason, alongside others who had known of the offence: several servants on both sides, as well as Lady Margaret Howard, wife of Lord William, and Hastings, servant to Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk. Hastings' knowledge might suggest that Agnes also knew. All walked free; but why?

The key to this case lay in the recent execution of Anne Boleyn and its immediate impact on the succession. With Anne dead and her marriage annulled, her daughter Princess Elizabeth could hardly remain the King's heir. This had necessitated the hasty formulation of the Second Succession Act, illegitimising Elizabeth and granting the King license to appoint a new heir.<sup>50</sup> Lady Margaret was Henry's niece. As Head has pointed out, with neither of Henry's daughters now considered legitimate heirs, her importance within the succession increased immeasurably almost overnight.<sup>51</sup> Clearly she could not now be allowed to make her own marriage, particularly not to a so-far undistinguished younger son. The marriage had to be broken irrevocably, and since it appears to have been both valid and binding, there was no way to do this save by terming it treason. The Second Succession Act, though passed, was not yet valid in law, so it could not be used to convict the pair and thus an act of attainer was used.<sup>52</sup> In order to secure the execution of Lord Thomas and thus the irrevocable dissolution of the marriage, the attainer construed Lord Thomas' action as an attempt to claim the

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<sup>49</sup> TNA SP1/126, fol. 48.

<sup>50</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 655-62.

<sup>51</sup> Head, "'Ledde and Seduced by the Devyll'", pp. 7-8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

throne of England through Lady Margaret, thus relying on the conventional interpretation of treason as imagining the death of the King.<sup>53</sup> Lord Thomas' attainder was one of only three which included clauses extending the treason law so that in future the crime listed would be legally treasonable. Interestingly, it also stated that in future, anybody advising or aiding in the making of such a match would share the penalties for high treason, a clause which, had it come into immediate effect, would have lost Mary her head.<sup>54</sup>

Why did this not occur? Significantly, the reason for Mary's escape also lay in the new succession. The Second Succession Act passed in June 1536 granted the King license to appoint his own heir, and it was widely rumoured that this clause was included specifically to allow him to name his illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond.<sup>55</sup> Mary was Richmond's wife; if he were the King's heir, she would be Queen-in-waiting. Small wonder, therefore, that she was not punished for her role in this treason. It would have made no sense at all to declare her legally dead through attainder, and then to upgrade her status by declaring her husband heir to the throne. Indeed, the fact that she walked free gives weight to Chapuys' statement that the King really was intending to name Richmond as his heir.<sup>56</sup> This was enormously significant for the Howard dynasty; to lose one Howard Queen, Anne Boleyn, and then potentially gain another within two months was wholly unprecedented and clearly demonstrates their political pre-eminence. The fact that this pre-eminence was evidenced through the women of the family underlines their importance within the dynasty and on a wider political stage. The aim of this treason case was not to convict everybody

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<sup>53</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 680-1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 680-1.

<sup>55</sup> *CSP Spain*, V (ii), 77 (p. 214).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

within sight. A clause was inserted stating that forfeiture of goods applied only to Howard and his heirs. This has been construed by Head as ‘designed to protect the interests of Howard relatives as well as assuage the anxieties of any others who had some role in Lord Thomas’ case.’<sup>57</sup> Another Howard woman, Lady Margaret, wife of Lord William, was rescued by this clause. The point was not even necessarily to enact the death penalty meted out to Lord Thomas. He eventually died of sickness in the Tower over a year later, and it is not clear whether he would ever have been executed.<sup>58</sup> His attainder was merely intended to discourage others from contracting marriage with royal women without leave, and to secure the dissolution of this marriage, both of which were necessary in order to secure the succession.

Unfortunately for Mary and for the Howards, her husband the Duke of Richmond never was named as Henry’s heir. During this investigation, he fell seriously ill. By 22 July Chapuys thought that he did not have long to live, and that this was the reason the King had not named him.<sup>59</sup> Since he died a day later, on 23 July, this seems an accurate assumption, and scuppered any hopes of Mary becoming Queen after the death of Henry VIII. What this case highlights, however, is that treason law was becoming feminised. Cases throughout the 1530s involved women on an unprecedented level. The presence of Howard women among them clearly shows that they were at the forefront of these developments, and underlines their political agency.

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<sup>57</sup> Head, “‘Ledde and Seduced by the Devyll’”, p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> TNA SP1/126, fol. 48.

<sup>59</sup> *CSP Spain*, V (ii), 77 (p. 214).

**“A most miserable case”: The Howard Women and the Fall of Catherine Howard, 1541-2**

The attainder and execution of Queen Catherine Howard in 1542 shows not only that the involvement of the Howard women in cases of high treason became more pronounced, but that it also became more dangerous as Henry's reign progressed. Two Howard women - Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and her daughter Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater - were imprisoned and attainted for misprision of treason. These were the first convictions of any Howard women as part of a treason case. Queen Catherine's attainder is also important because it exhibits the developments in legal, social, and political thought regarding treason since the trial of Anne Boleyn five years previously.

Catherine's case was similar to Anne's in several respects. Both women were found guilty of adulterous liaisons during marriage to Henry VIII. However, Catherine's went further in almost every sense. Anne's conviction was on grounds of imagining the King's death by discussing his impotence and her potential remarriage after his death, which was treason under the 1352 Treason Statute. Her adulteries were not permitted to count as treason because, quite simply, under existing law they were not. This had not changed in the intervening years, but in 1541 the government chose, and was allowed, to bypass what was strictly legal and label Catherine's adulteries high treason by act of attainder.<sup>60</sup> Her attainder was one of only a few throughout the period which included a clause to alter the treason law, in this case ensuring that in the future, adultery on the part of a Queen would be considered high treason, as would

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<sup>60</sup> Bellamy has suggested that this was due to opposition from judges, who were not happy to allow her crimes to be construed as treason under existing law; Bellamy, p. 41.

concealment of unchastity prior to making a royal marriage.<sup>61</sup> These were female crimes and new precedents. As Bellamy states, ‘there was nothing in the history of treason to suggest that adultery on the part of the Queen was traitorous’.<sup>62</sup> This may suggest that in the wake of Anne Boleyn (1536), Lady Margaret Douglas (1536), and Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury (1539-41) women’s actions were perceived to be a greater threat to the stability of Henry’s reign than had been the case hitherto.

Furthermore, in Anne’s case, only the Queen and her alleged lovers had gone to the block. In Catherine’s, her alleged accomplice Lady Rochford, widow of George Boleyn and therefore a relative of the Howards by marriage, was also executed, and a large number of others were convicted of misprision of treason, including our two Howard women. This analysis will ask how they were involved, and how the Howard family as a whole dealt with this treason; did they close ranks and work together to save themselves from Queen Catherine’s fate, or did they scatter, perhaps turn on one another, each individual for his or herself? What can this tell us about the way a political dynasty might function in a time of crisis?

I have already discussed some aspects of the behaviour of the Pole family when under threat of treason in 1538, to show that here there appears to have been some notion of family strategy in a time of danger. Following discussion with his brother, Sir Geoffrey Pole sent a message to his wife to burn his letters, which she immediately did. We will see that this incident in particular holds resonance for the actions of the Howard women when under threat in 1541. It is also evident that Lady Constance knew of the danger the family was in; a

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<sup>61</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 857-9.

<sup>62</sup> Bellamy, p. 41.



messenger declared that she was ‘in heaviness for such news as there was of her husband...and opening of Holland’s going to sea’.<sup>63</sup> Since Holland was the Pole brothers’ messenger to their exiled – and treasonous – brother Reginald, it is clear that this referred to the family’s treason. Henry Pole, Lord Montagu, had also previously warned his brother Geoffrey to say nothing if he were ever examined regarding the whole matter, a clear sign that they had discussed what to do in just such an eventuality.<sup>64</sup> Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, the Pole family’s widowed matriarch, also exhibited some signs of family cohesion during questioning. When she heard that her son Geoffrey had been arrested, she stated that she was sure he was ‘not so unhappy that he will hurt his mother’.<sup>65</sup> When she herself was questioned, she steadfastly gave nothing away that might harm either herself or any member of her family, causing her examiners to term her ‘manlike in continuance’.<sup>66</sup> Again, this has similarities with the Howard women during questioning. The detail of the depositions is preserved in both cases; we might, therefore, expect to find similar evidence of ‘family strategy’ during crisis among the Howards.

Let us begin with a brief resumé of events to highlight the women’s involvement. Approximately ten years before this case, in 1531, Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, had accepted her niece, Catherine Howard, as her ward. Though we do not know the precise date, 1531 is the most likely year for two reasons: it was the year in which Catherine’s impoverished father secured the controllership of Calais, thus presumably dispersing his English household to minimise expenses, and it was also the year that an existing ward of Agnes’,

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<sup>63</sup> Dodds and Dodds, II, p. 305.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>65</sup> Dodds and Dodds, II, p. 315; see also Pierce, p. 129.

<sup>66</sup> Dodds and Dodds, II, p. 317; Pierce, pp. 137-9.

Catherine Broughton, married Agnes' son Lord William Howard, leaving a vacancy in her household, then based at Cheseworth House in Horsham, Sussex.<sup>67</sup> Catherine Howard's birthdate has been estimated to lie somewhere between 1518 and 1524, most likely towards the latter year, and thus in 1531 she was probably aged around ten or eleven.<sup>68</sup> As such, she was a very minor member of Agnes' household.<sup>69</sup>

At some point after October 1536, Agnes moved her household to the Howard house at Lambeth.<sup>70</sup> Around this time she employed a local tutor, one Henry Manno, to teach music to Catherine and probably her other wards Katherine Tylney and Agnes ap Rhys.<sup>71</sup> We know from depositions later taken from members of that household that Manno and Catherine embarked upon a sexual affair. It is unclear whether it went as far as full intercourse, and also unclear who was the instigator, though both parties actively continued it. Mary Hall, then nurse to Agnes' granddaughter in the neighbouring household of her son Lord William, told in 1541 how Catherine would steal Agnes' keys to the maids chamber in order to admit Manno at night, while he actively boasted of his intention to marry her.<sup>72</sup> The affair did not continue beyond the autumn of 1538 at the latest, because by this time, Catherine had begun a new affair with

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<sup>67</sup> *LP V*, 318 (21). Catherine Broughton was the elder of the two daughters of Sir John Broughton; on his death in 1529, Agnes was granted Catherine's wardship by letters patent. For further discussion of Agnes' fostering, see Chapter 2.

<sup>68</sup> Warnicke, 'Katherine, Queen of England', *ODNB* [accessed 25 June 2011]; Smith, 'Appendix: Catherine Howard's Birth' in *Catherine Howard*, pp. 192-4.

<sup>69</sup> These were all duties of a maid of honour at court: see Merton, 'The Women Who Served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth', pp. 63-121.

<sup>70</sup> The latest extant reference to Agnes' household being at Cheseworth is October 1536, as shown in a letter from her son Lord William to Cromwell: TNA SP1/107, fol. 127.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Hall, a former chamberer of Agnes' in Lambeth, stated in a deposition taken in 1541 that the 'misconduct' between Catherine and Manno took place whilst she was nurse to Agnes' granddaughter, child of Lord William Howard (TNA SP1/167, fol. 110). The child was born in May 1537, dating Hall's nursing and Manno's employment to this year. However, Manno stated in 1541 that he had come to Agnes' service 'about v yeres past' which would date his appointment to 1536: (TNA SP1/167, fol. 117).

<sup>72</sup> TNA SP1/167, fols. 110-113.

Francis Dereham, one of the Duke's gentleman-pensioners.<sup>73</sup> According to the confessions of those involved, this affair did reach intercourse, and continued until she was called to court for the arrival of Queen Anne of Cleves in the winter of 1539.<sup>74</sup>

The extent of Agnes' knowledge of these affairs is difficult to assess. Mannoxx stated that she had discovered him with Catherine, beaten them, and forbidden them to be alone together, and Katherine Tylney, another ward, deposed the same about Dereham.<sup>75</sup> However, she also stated that she did not think Agnes was aware of the sexual nature of Catherine and Dereham's relationship, only that there was flirtation between them. Joan Bulmer and Alice Wilkes, servants in Agnes' household, stated that Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater, had also known of Catherine's pre-marital activities, and had told the future Queen that 'if she used that sort it wold hurte her beautye'.<sup>76</sup> Both, of course, denied all knowledge, and the truth of this will be considered in more detail later on.<sup>77</sup>

By April 1540, Catherine had left Agnes' household and was officially being courted by the King.<sup>78</sup> It later came out that Agnes had allegedly coached her in how to behave during this period, and had recommended her to the King.<sup>79</sup> She was married to him in July following the execution of minister Thomas Cromwell, and an annulment of the King's marriage to Anne of Cleves. For a

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<sup>73</sup> TNA SP1/167, fol. 161: Andrew Maunsay, servant to the duchess, stated that he saw Dereham and Catherine in bed together three times, a year before she went to court in December 1539. On Dereham's employment see Smith, p. 53.

<sup>74</sup> TNA SP1/167, fols. 121-121v; Catherine's confession was recorded by Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, and Dereham's was detailed in the despatch sent by the privy council to William Paget, ambassador in France.

<sup>75</sup> TNA SP1/167, fol. 117v; TNA SP1/168, fols. 8-8v.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 159v.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 87.

<sup>78</sup> *LP XV*, 611 (12). These grants are usually taken as a sign of official courtship, since grants to individual maids of honour were rare.

<sup>79</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 76-7.

while, life was rosy. However, Catherine soon began an affair with Thomas Culpeper, a gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, and took her former lover Dereham into her service, allegedly at the suit of Agnes, her daughter Katherine, and daughter-in-law Lady Margaret Howard.<sup>80</sup> This precarious house of cards collapsed in October 1541, the sequence of which is detailed in the letter written by the Privy Council to William Paget in France.<sup>81</sup> Mary Hall, formerly Agnes' chamberer, passed on her knowledge of Catherine's pre-marital affairs to her brother, who in turn notified some of the King's ministers. Afraid to approach him verbally, Cranmer wrote the King a letter and laid it before him after mass on All Souls' Day in 1541. Astounded and disbelieving, Henry ordered an investigation, during which the Culpeper affair also came to light. Depositions were taken from all those involved, and many witnesses and other servants within Agnes' and the Queen's households.

The corroboration between different accounts is startling and proves the truth of Catherine's affairs. Culpeper and Dereham were executed in early December.<sup>82</sup> Catherine herself was executed for high treason in February 1542 alongside Jane, Lady Rochford, a Howard by marriage, who had facilitated the Culpeper affair.<sup>83</sup> Thirteen members of the extended Howard family and of Agnes' household were convicted and imprisoned on charges of misprision of treason, including Agnes herself, her daughter Katherine, later Countess of Bridgewater, and her son Lord William Howard, who lived nearby.<sup>84</sup> The charge

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<sup>80</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 87.

<sup>81</sup> *LP* XVI, 1334.

<sup>82</sup> *CSP Spain*, VI (i), 213.

<sup>83</sup> Jane, née Parker, was the daughter of Henry Parker Lord Morley, and the widow of George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, brother to Queen Anne Boleyn. See Julia Fox, *Jane Boleyn* (London: Phoenix, 2008).

<sup>84</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 280. The others convicted were: Joan Bulmer, Alice Wilkes/Restwold, Katherine Tylney, Malyn Tylney, Lady Margaret Howard, Margaret Bennet, Anne Howard, Edward Waldegrave, Robert Dampore, and William Ashby.

of misprision spells out the grounds for their conviction: all were accused of having known of Catherine's various affairs, and of wilfully concealing them. The term 'misprision of treason' was somewhat new in 1541 as it made its debut only in the 1534 Treason Act.<sup>85</sup> In 1534 the legal definition of 'misprision of treason' was to know of treason and to deliberately conceal it. It was uniquely a crime of inaction. The sentence was perpetual imprisonment and forfeiture of goods, and since it was a common law crime, it was more usual for suspects to be indicted and tried rather than attainted, though the opposite proved true for Agnes and Katherine.<sup>86</sup> It is important to stress the novelty of this crime when considering reactions to it. For Agnes, certainly, misprision would have been a new-fangled and strange element of the rapidly changing treason laws; born around 1477, the majority of her life had been spent under the 1352 statute which made no mention of misprision. Even for Katherine, whose defining experience of treason was the attainder and execution of her husband Rhys ap Griffith in 1531, this would have been unfamiliar territory. It is likely that they would not immediately have known what they were facing, nor how to combat it, and we must bear this in mind when considering their actions following arrest.

Having highlighted the areas in which the women were involved – potentially knowing of Catherine's pre-marital adulteries, encouraging the King to court her, and suing for her to take her former lover Dereham into her service at court – it becomes clear that the decisive issue for the Howards was not the Culpeper affair, but the two earlier ones, most particularly her relationship with Francis Dereham. The authorities presumed that since these flirtations had occurred within Agnes' household, she and her family should be held

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<sup>85</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 508-9.

<sup>86</sup> Bellamy, p. 30.

responsible. It was also generally assumed that Catherine's affairs had been an open secret, and that, despite knowing of her proclivities, the family had encouraged the King to marry her without informing him of her track record; hence the clause contained within the attainder which made it treasonable to conceal unchastity before marrying the King.

Were they guilty of these things? Though Norfolk's biographer David Head simply states that 'it is not clear' whether Norfolk knew of his niece's pre- and post-marital affairs, it seems most likely that he did not.<sup>87</sup> His innocence was accepted by King and Council, and no deposition suggests that he was aware of the night banquets. Both Agnes and Katherine, and the others accused, steadfastly denied everything. However, the evidence makes clear that both women did sue to the Queen for Dereham.<sup>88</sup> It is also likely that they knew of at least flirtation between Catherine and Dereham, since Katherine had warned her that the night parties would 'hurte her beautye' and Agnes was consistently recorded by her servants as fearing that the arrests were due to something Catherine had done in the Lambeth household before her marriage.<sup>89</sup> We will never know whether or not they knew that the relationship had been a sexual one. Members of the household when questioned were not sure themselves.<sup>90</sup>

It is also impossible to tell whether they had, indeed, praised Catherine to the King and his ministers and instructed her how to behave. This accusation was really concerned with whether the Howards had manipulated the King into marrying their girl on false pretences. These two uncertainties are closely linked.

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<sup>87</sup> Head, p. 184.

<sup>88</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 87.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 159v, 14, 85v.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Hall and Katherine Tylney thought that the duchess did not know; Henry Mannoxx stated that she had found out, and William Pewson seemed unsure: TNA SP1/167, fols. 111, 118v; TNA SP1/168, fols. 8, 85.

It seems highly unlikely that Agnes and Katherine would have pushed Catherine onto the King's notice and thus onto the throne if they had known that she was not a virgin, had a tendency towards love affairs, and may already have been married to Dereham. Thus Smith suggests that they may not have known the full extent of Catherine's affairs.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, if they did not know these things, there is every reason to suppose that they would have encouraged the King once his preference was clear. Perhaps more to the point, it seems unlikely that they had a choice in the matter once the King had set his sights on Catherine, for they could hardly have refused him. We cannot blame Agnes and Katherine for the family's ruin on this occasion.

The reactions of the Howards as individuals and as a family to the early arrests of Dereham and Catherine give insight into the functioning of a noble dynasty when faced with accusations of treason. What emerges, however, is not a picture of a cohesive family working in unity to safeguard their collective interests, but of individuals fighting for their own lives and the lives of those closest to them. The Duke of Norfolk was the first to hear of the suspicions against Catherine. At the instigation of the Privy Council, Cranmer had informed the King on All Souls' Day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, and after prevaricating for a few days, the King sent an urgent summons to Norfolk and others on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and consulted with them the following day.<sup>92</sup> The deposition of Agnes' gentleman usher Robert Damporte tells us that she had heard of Dereham's arrest by Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November, but not the reason behind it. On that day she sent Damporte to the Duke of Norfolk to invite him to sleep at her house that night, since it was too late to go home. Clearly she meant to gather details from Norfolk, but he refused

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<sup>91</sup> Smith, p. 58.

<sup>92</sup> *CSP Spain*, VI (i), 204; *LP XVI*, 1332.

her offer, saying – legitimately - that he had to go to court on the King's business.<sup>93</sup> Tellingly, he does not seem to have informed Agnes of the political storm close at hand, since she questioned Damporte on his return and remained none the wiser as to the reason for Dereham's arrest.<sup>94</sup> The fact that by the time Agnes sent her message it was 'too late' for Norfolk to return home means that he must already have met with the King, and therefore certainly knew of the initial accusations against his niece.

Yet there is no evidence that he tried to warn any member of the family. As Head has noted, 'self-interest had always been one of Thomas Howard's highest priorities', and he was able to escape from this affair 'in part by abandoning his relatives at the first hint of trouble'.<sup>95</sup> Should we blame him for this? One can appreciate the difficulty of his position. The King had evidently intended their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December to furnish Norfolk with an opportunity to prove his loyalty to the Crown, and this was not framed as a choice. Arguably, if Norfolk had not immediately disassociated himself from his family, he would not have survived. His refusal to visit his stepmother that evening might itself have been intended as a warning.

Whether Agnes really needed concrete information from her stepson is debatable, since she jumped to the correct conclusion instantly. Though Damporte could not tell her why Dereham had been arrested, she said that she feared there was 'some ill' and that it was something done when he and Catherine had been in her house.<sup>96</sup> She did not, however, expect Catherine to suffer, adding that if it was done before her marriage, she would not die for it,

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<sup>93</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 48.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 48.

<sup>95</sup> Head, p. 190.

<sup>96</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 14.



and expecting only that the girl would be sent back to live at Lambeth again.<sup>97</sup> This demonstrates Agnes' knowledge of the law. Pre-marital adultery was not treasonable, and Agnes clearly knew that. Once the Culpeper affair was discovered on 13<sup>th</sup> November she clearly grew more worried. She took decisive action in several different ways, most of which point towards the aim of preserving her immediate family and affinity.

Firstly, the collective evidence of Agnes' steward, comptroller and chaplain, and the deposition of her widowed relative Malyn Tylney tell us that Agnes discussed the arrests, reasons behind them, and probable outcomes with her female relatives. Her servants stated that Agnes' daughter-in-law, Lady Margaret Howard, had 'trobled her moche' by saying that she feared Lord William's knowledge of the adulteries, showing that the two women discussed the case.<sup>98</sup> Malyn told how Agnes had questioned her closely on what she thought would happen.<sup>99</sup> There is no evidence that any collective strategy to avoid arrest or questioning was planned, and Malyn claimed to have told Agnes that she was not allowed to answer her questions or discuss the case with her.<sup>100</sup> Secondly, Agnes considered sending a warning to her son, Lord William Howard, who was then with an embassy in Calais.<sup>101</sup> This was a sound move, and one which speaks of familial concern, since it would have prepared William for recall and questioning. Bellamy tells us that those who were prepared stood a better chance of acquittal.<sup>102</sup> However, her steward William Ashby stated that she was 'advised' not to do this – he did not say by whom - perhaps because it

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<sup>97</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 48.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 83.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 145.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 145-145v.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 83.

<sup>102</sup> Bellamy, pp. 144-50.

would have been more beneficial to preserve his innocence of the affair, or because he had already been officially summonsed.<sup>103</sup> This suggests that Agnes thought William did not know about Catherine's affairs and might therefore escape, and denotes serious concern for the safety of her immediate family.

Once Dereham, Damporte and others had been seized and taken to the Tower, Agnes took more drastic action, possibly assisted by her daughter Katherine. Katherine lived in nearby Southwark during this time, and her children were being brought up within Agnes' household.<sup>104</sup> She appears to have spent a considerable amount of time at Norfolk House, since she knew about Catherine's night banquets. The depositions of Agnes' servants tell us that on 14<sup>th</sup> November, ostensibly searching for material to send to the Council to aid the investigation, but clearly aiming to dispose of any incriminating evidence, Agnes broke open Dereham and Damporte's coffers and removed certain of their contents.<sup>105</sup> She did this during the night, without informing any member of the Privy Council, which makes it clear that it was intended to be secret. Present at the opening of the coffers were her steward Ashby, one yeoman of the ewer, and her chaplain Borough, who later informed her comptroller.<sup>106</sup> She took out certain letters and read them, 'sending for her spectacles'.<sup>107</sup> Her comptroller, when questioned, was not certain what she then did with the letters, but thought that she kept them, perhaps burning them.<sup>108</sup> Katherine, later Countess of Bridgwater, may also have known about the emptying of the coffers, since she

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<sup>103</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 97-91v.

<sup>104</sup> Nicholas, *PCP*, VII, p. 280.

<sup>105</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 96.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 83.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 83.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 83.

was also questioned about it.<sup>109</sup> This was precisely what Lady Constance Pole had also done in 1538, and what Honor Lisle's maid Mary Hussey did in April 1540 during the Botolf Conspiracy.<sup>110</sup>

Destroying the evidence undoubtedly made sense. It was also effective: Agnes' comptroller testified that she had searched the coffers and removed papers herself three or four days before her stepson the Duke of Norfolk arrived on the same mission, sent by the King, and he found only ballads for the lute.<sup>111</sup> Norfolk's role in this episode is somewhat damning. At first glance it appears that the Council learned of Agnes' breaking of the coffers through the confessions of her servants, beginning on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>112</sup> However, the interrogatories for Agnes included questions concerning the coffers, and these were compiled on 1<sup>st</sup> December or earlier.<sup>113</sup> Thus they must have known about the breaking of the coffers before Ashby confessed it. Norfolk wrote his own plea for mercy to the King on 15<sup>th</sup> December, and in it he reminded the King that much had come to light through his report of Agnes' words when he was sent to Lambeth to search Dereham's coffers.<sup>114</sup> Again, it is easy to appreciate that Norfolk was in a difficult position. However it is hard not to think badly of him for 'shopping' his stepmother so very thoroughly when he could surely simply have said he did not find anything in her household, and had not heard anything incriminating; this, after all, was precisely what Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, did when questioned regarding her sons' treason. This was not a family trying to shield its collective self, but individual family members turning on one another.

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<sup>109</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 76-76v.

<sup>110</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters: An Abridgement* (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 502-3.

<sup>111</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 83.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 80.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 143-143v.

Furthermore, Norfolk's chosen role as informant shows that in breaking the coffers to destroy evidence, Agnes was acting on her own initiative, not following any kind of family policy or patriarchal orders. She chose to take the law into her own hands in an attempt to protect not only herself, but her children, grandchildren, and household affinity from the consequences of her ward's treason.

Not only did Agnes destroy what was evidently compromising evidence, but she also used her knowledge of the law and the legal system to try to find a loophole. The depositions of Ashby, her comptroller, and her chaplain tell us that she sent her grandson Griffith Rhys, her grandson, to her steward to ask for a book of statutes kept within the household. When asked the reason, the boy replied that she wanted to know whether the general pardon was contained within it, so that she could see if it would serve for those who knew of Catherine Howard's 'naughty life' before her marriage.<sup>115</sup> This was legal know-how in the most practical sense. Bellamy tells us that general pardons were issued periodically, often as a result of a specific uprising, either as proclamations or as acts of parliament. They allowed anybody to go to the court of Kings Bench or Chancery, pay a small fee, and obtain a pardon for any treasons, felonies, or other crimes committed, whether one was indicted or not, and were thus a useful way to avoid a conviction.<sup>116</sup> The last general pardon before December 1541 had been issued in July 1540, and might indeed have served to help her were it not for the date: this act allowed pardons for crimes committed before 1<sup>st</sup> July 1540, and this would have covered only half of Catherine's 'naughty life'.<sup>117</sup> This is presumably why Agnes gave up the idea. However, it speaks volumes for her

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<sup>115</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 80-83v.

<sup>116</sup> Bellamy, pp. 219-224.

<sup>117</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 809-12.

caution that she kept a book of statutes within her household. The involvement of her grandson in fetching the book could suggest the knowledge and involvement of his mother, Agnes' daughter Katherine, which might mean that they had discussed the legal nature of the case together. It may also suggest Griffith Rhys' own desire to help, since at fifteen he was by no means too young to understand the danger that they were in.<sup>118</sup>

Under examination, Agnes, Katherine, and Lord William all appear to have remained mute as long as possible. Wriothesley declared that 'as for bridgewater she sheweth herself her motheres dowghter, that is oon that will by no menys confesse any thing that may towche her', and Lord William was described as 'as stiff as his mother and made himself most clear from all kind of mystrust or suspition'.<sup>119</sup> Again, this is remarkably similar to the behaviour of the Poles under questioning. Only once it was clear that Agnes and those around her were going to suffer for their knowledge of the Queen's affairs did Agnes fall back on more traditional methods of delaying sentence. By 4<sup>th</sup> December, she was bed-bound, feigning sickness. The earl of Southampton, Wriothesley, and Mr Pollard, visiting her in the guise of comforters, wrote that she was not so sick as they had expected to find her, but once they suggested that she visit Mr Chancellor for questioning, she 'began to be very sick, even at the heart'.<sup>120</sup> Quite likely she was suffering from shock, and her claims of sickness and frailty once incarcerated within the Tower were probably very real, since she was no longer a young woman and the Tower was not renowned for prolonging its inmates lives.<sup>121</sup> It is, however, somewhat striking that she did not follow the

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<sup>118</sup> Griffiths, 'Rice family', *ODNB* [accessed 3 October 2011].

<sup>119</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 113 and 122.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 51-51v.

<sup>121</sup> Bellamy, p. 93.

pattern of other women accused of treason, notably Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, and plead female weakness as an excuse for her actions.<sup>122</sup> It is unlikely that she chose not to do this because she did not see herself in this way; Daybell has shown that women used this rhetoric regardless.<sup>123</sup> It is possible that this in itself reveals that the King's mentality and the nature of treason cases was thought to have changed during this period. Perhaps Agnes understood that the King was out for revenge, and that she was unlikely to be able to free herself using this tactic.

We can see that both Katherine and particularly Agnes attempted to combat this situation through manipulation of the law and through deliberate destruction of incriminating evidence. Agnes' actions show that not only was she trying to protect herself and her children, Katherine and William, but also members of her household who also stood to be indicted for their knowledge. She could, doubtless, have broken open Dereham and Damporte's coffers alone, read the papers and burnt them without any witnesses. The presence of her steward, chaplain, and yeoman, however, shows both that she allowed accomplices, and that they chose this role, because they and she had a common goal. This matches with what we have seen in the Pole family during their crisis of 1538-9; when faced with accusations of treason, immediate family conferred together and decided what was best to be done.

The actions of the Duke of Norfolk do not fit this interpretation. He appears to have made little effort to preserve any members of his family at risk in this situation, having placed himself at the King's service from the beginning, even to the extent of informing on his family. He did not inform his step-mother

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<sup>122</sup> See Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 255.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255-6.

of the likely charges facing her and her family; he did not warn his half-brother William of what awaited him on his return from Calais; he searched his family's house for evidence on royal orders, and reported their speech where it incriminated them.<sup>124</sup> The moment Agnes, Katherine and William were imprisoned, Norfolk returned to the country and sent the King a necessarily grovelling epistle exonerating himself, denigrating his unfortunate family, and pleading for mercy.<sup>125</sup> The French ambassador Marillac thought that Norfolk was pleased when Agnes was stripped of her possessions; he stated that 'Norfolk is greatly interested, since the greater part came to her through his late father; yet the times are such that he dare not show that the affair touches him, but approves all that is done'.<sup>126</sup> Again, while one can appreciate his dilemma, he appears to have gone to extremes to protect himself at the expense of his relatives, and this does not speak for the unity of the entire Howard dynasty during a political crisis.

The way in which the King used the law to deal with the Howards, though, might suggest that he himself considered the dynasty as a collective political entity. This may reveal a key juxtaposition between the way the family behaved during a crisis, and the way in which they were treated by the authorities. The convictions of the Howards made Catherine's adulteries not the folly of a girl and her friends, but the disloyalty of her family. This was particularly centred on the women. Of those convicted or attainted for misprision of treason, only four were men and only one of these a member of the family,

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<sup>124</sup> TNA SP1/168, fols. 143-143v.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 143-143v.

<sup>126</sup> *LP* XVII, 100.

whilst nine were women, of whom six were Howards or extended family.<sup>127</sup> Why were the women targeted in this way? It is interesting that this reflects the nature of Catherine Howard's treason. Infidelity and adultery were particularly female crimes, as we have seen, and were new to treason law. Focusing the associated convictions on the women of Catherine's family, rather than the men, underlined the feminine nature of her crimes and this perhaps magnified the danger and baseness of her adulterous liaisons. This had the added advantage of saving Henry's manhood; to be cuckolded once was unfortunate, but twice, and by the first woman's cousin, was inexcusably careless. To apportion it to the depravity and disloyalty of not just one woman, but a whole host, may have helped to remove Henry from the sordid situation. However, it also gave women a new visibility by demonstrating that they were sufficiently dangerous to merit conviction and imprisonment. This shows that the public role permitted to women had grown, legally, politically, and socially since the case of Anne Boleyn in 1536.

However, not all of the women who suffered in this case were trialled at common law. We know that Catherine Howard was attainted by act of parliament because her crimes were not legally treason. Agnes, duchess of Norfolk, and Katherine, countess of Bridgewater, were also attainted rather than tried; but why, when their crime was not high treason but misprision, the same as those who underwent a trial? It could not have been a legal issue. Though Catherine's crimes were not legally treasonable, and thus the misprision was not either, that had not prevented the remainder of the accused undergoing trial on 22 December 1541, before the Queen and our two women were attainted on 16

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<sup>127</sup> Agnes, duchess of Norfolk, Katherine, countess of Bridgewater, Lady Margaret Howard, Katherine Tylney, Malyn Tylney, and Anne Howard.



January 1542.<sup>128</sup> We know that attainder was traditionally used in order to secure lands and property that the King could not otherwise have acquired, but though Agnes and Katherine were probably the wealthiest of those accused, the 1534 Treason Act had made it possible for the King to obtain any and all assets without resorting to attainder.<sup>129</sup> We are left with the political connotations of attainder, and the sense that the King was making a point. Since attainder was itself a declaration of guilt without due legal process, it was also a means to prevent the accused speaking in their defence, and as Harris states, it created a cultural memory of treason against that person and their family.<sup>130</sup> It was designed to supersede all memory of previous glory or power and leave only the taint of treason, and by association, disloyalty and dishonour. It therefore stretched into the past, but also into the future, staining all descendants of the attainted. For Henry to deliberately attaint both Agnes and Katherine was therefore a powerful political tool. It was also symbolic. The title of ‘Duchess of Norfolk’, and Agnes’ position as matriarch of the dynasty made her a Howard figurehead, and to attaint her was clearly a strike at the Howard name. Katherine was closely associated with her mother, and therefore with the dynasty; after examining her, Wriothesley wrote that ‘she sheweth herself her motheres dowghter, that is oon that will by no menys confesse any thing that may towche her.’<sup>131</sup> There is no evidence that any of the other women involved proved difficult during questioning. Our Howard women were clearly proud and courageous, uncowed and unusually defiant in the face of the King and the law,

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<sup>128</sup> *LP XVI*, 1470; *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 857-9.

<sup>129</sup> Bellamy, p. 34; *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 508-9.

<sup>130</sup> Harris, ‘Censoring Disobedient Subjects’, in *Reputation and Representation*, ed. by Biggs *et al.*, p. 215.

<sup>131</sup> TNA SP1/168, fol. 113.

and this perhaps was another reason why only they were singled out for a more thorough and lasting condemnation.

## **Conclusion**

The Howard women were involved in, and punished for, some of the most high-profile treason cases of Henry VIII's reign, and this is the first study to analyse these events from the perspective of these women. Not only does this add a new dimension to the existing Howard narrative, but it opens a new window onto the concept of family strategy in politics, and onto the swift development of the treason law during this period. All three of these cases either caused or included changes to the treason law; this means that the Howard women were at the forefront of legal change during this period, which underlines their political importance and reminds us that the Howard dynasty lived their lives in the shadow of the Crown.

How, and why, were the Howard women caught up in so many treason cases during this period? This may shed light on our understanding of the Howard dynasty's collective reaction to a crisis, and women's role therein. Though it is possible to find examples of individual women involved in more than one case of treason during this period – Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, for instance – it is difficult to find a family where this happened simultaneously to more than one woman. The Countess of Salisbury was the only Pole woman to be imprisoned, let alone executed, for her part in the Exeter Conspiracy despite her daughter-in-law Lady Constance's role in burning incriminating letters. Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, had no daughters, but did have sisters; though one sister, Lady Catherine

Champernowne, was also involved alongside Gertrude in the nun of Kent affair in 1534, there is no evidence that any of Gertrude's female relatives took part in the Exeter Conspiracy for which she was imprisoned in 1538.<sup>132</sup> Were they simply more circumspect than the Howards? It seems clear that in the three cases considered in this chapter, none of the Howard women actively intended to be caught up in treason. Moreover, none of the crimes from these three cases were legally treasonable at the time that they occurred, so it is eminently plausible that the women simply did not realise that they were running this risk. They would doubtless have known that adultery, marrying without permission, and pre-marital affairs were wrong and might cause some kind of trouble if discovered. But in all three cases, the problem for the Howard women was not what they themselves did, but what they knew other people had done. One could therefore argue that their involvement with, and in the case of Catherine Howard, their convictions for treason or misprision were simply bad luck.

However, the chance of encountering such bad luck was raised by the Howard family's position as a court family in the shadow of the Crown. Spending time at court, particularly serving in the Queen's household, meant that these women were statistically more likely to have known about these events – Anne Boleyn's adultery and Margaret Douglas' marriage particularly – than those who stayed away. The political position of the Howard dynasty made convictions for treason and misprision more likely, and thus the Howard women are perhaps not wholly representative of noblewomen in this respect. However, the Howard men had equal opportunity to gain forbidden knowledge at court, and yet in these cases it is clear that it was the women who were responsible for

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<sup>132</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III, p. 446.

leading the family into danger, however inadvertently. This demonstrates women's political significance; knowledge alone, without any action, could have drastic dynastic effect, which is why female-centric studies like these are so important to our understanding of political history.

Is there any evidence that the Howards banded together and either enacted, or formulated, any kind of 'family strategy' in the event of these crises? We saw that the Pole family appear to have done this; aware that they were running risks, they discussed what to do if they should be examined, destroyed evidence, and attempted to protect one another when the storm did break. It is difficult to say whether the Howards did likewise, particularly for the case of Anne Boleyn where so little evidence survives. For Lord Thomas Howard's marriage, however, there is a possibility that the women of the Howard family did connive to conceal this as long as possible. We know that not only Mary, Duchess of Richmond, but also Lady Margaret Howard (Lord Thomas' sister-in-law) and his mother Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, may have known. The wealth of evidence surviving from examinations after Catherine Howard's fall makes it far easier to assess the family's reaction in this case, and it appears that like the Poles, some members of the Howard dynasty did indeed confer and attempt to protect the family as a whole. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, discussed the arrests and possible courses of action with members of her household and family, and her destruction of evidence shows that she was keen to shield them. When under examination, she, her daughter Katherine, later Countess of Bridgewater, and Lord William Howard remained mute. We must also consider the role of Lady Margaret Howard, Lord William's wife, for though she is a little-known figure and not one of the five subjects of this study,

she played a prominent role in these treason cases. She, too, knew of Lord Thomas Howard's marriage and concealed it; likewise she knew of Catherine Howard's treason and discussed courses of action with her mother-in-law Agnes. Though she was described by Wriothesley as one who 'suerly semeth to be a symple woman', her actions belie this. She was sharp enough to have known about her husband's association with servant Alice Wilkes, and after her pardon in February 1542 Chapuys tells us that she spoke with the King in an effort to secure the release of her husband and Agnes, her mother-in-law.<sup>133</sup> The exception to this 'family strategy', if one can so term it, was the Duke of Norfolk, who moved to secure his own safety partly by 'shopping' his relatives to the Council. This is not surprising given what we know of Norfolk's qualities, but we must not forget the difficulty of his position. Had he not done this, he would undoubtedly have fallen alongside his relatives, and with him would have gone the Howard name, the Dukedom of Norfolk, and the family patrimony. Nevertheless the extent of Norfolk's betrayal leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth, for he did not stop at distancing himself from his unfortunate relatives, but actively - and, I would argue, unnecessarily - reported their speech to the King.

Unfortunately no concrete evidence survives of the rest of the family's reaction to Norfolk's behaviour here, though his own grovelling letter to the King written in 1546 may suggest that relations had been strained following what they saw as his betrayal. When listing his many enemies, he counted his stepmother Agnes among them, because he had reported her speech in 1541.<sup>134</sup> This suggests that the men and women of the family may have possessed

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<sup>133</sup> *LP* XVII, App. B, 11.

<sup>134</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 101.

conflicting notions of family strategy and support, which presents Tudor politics in a new and important light. Undoubtedly, this is worthy of future investigation.

To return briefly to the legal implications of these cases, I have suggested that they played a part in ‘feminising’ treason law during this period, because all three cases rendered traditionally female crimes treasonable. However, this highlights something of a disparity between the reactions of the government to women’s rebellion, discussed in Chapter 4, and to treason. In the case of women’s rebellion, Chapter 4 argued that the government often chose to ignore women’s actions because to acknowledge them would also be to acknowledge a female threat to the patriarchal order. Why was this not the case for women’s involvement in treason cases? Rebellion, of course, could easily be construed as treason but retained a fundamental difference: involvement in rebellion was an active choice, whereas these cases have shown that treason was often accidental or passive. Were ‘female’ crimes such as adultery therefore perceived as a greater threat to the Crown than traditionally ‘male’ ones like armed rebellion during this period? It is interesting that the three cases considered in this chapter appear to show a development in this regard; the actions of the women alongside Anne Boleyn appear barely acknowledged in May 1536; they were acknowledged but unpunished for Lord Thomas Howard’s marriage in July 1536; then acknowledged and punished in the case of Catherine Howard in 1541-2. This may tie in with the growth in Henrician absolutism observed by historians such as Mary Polito, and might suggest that some actions of women were increasingly perceived as a threat to the stability of the Crown as this period

progressed.<sup>135</sup> To sustain this argument would require a far fuller investigation encompassing more cases of treason, and more noblewomen than the Howards, and is merely included here as a suggestion. It does, however, highlight the potential for more work in this area, as it clearly shows that women's involvement in politics requires closer attention.

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<sup>135</sup> Polito, pp. 309-30; see also Janelle Greenberg, 'Our Grand Maxim of State: "The King Can Do No Wrong"', *History of Political Thought* 12 (1991), 209-28; Michael J. Sechler, "'A King Can Do No Wrong': The English Reformation and the Rise of the Modern Nation State', University of Pittsburgh Research Symposium 2004, <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/ursymposium/2004/Publication FINAL.pdf> [accessed 29 January 2013].

## **Chapter 7**

### **A Conservative Family?**

The implications of the Reformation are inescapable for any historian seeking to explore the politics and personalities of Henry VIII's reign. As Peter Marshall has stated, Henry's break with Rome and subsequent royal supremacy over the Church meant that there was no longer such a thing as a 'privatised sphere of apolitical piety'; religious observance had become a political statement.<sup>1</sup> For families like the Howards, therefore, exploration of their religious sympathies during the turbulent 1530s and 40s has the potential to affect our understanding of their actions. However, the Howard women's religion has never been collectively examined, which means that we are missing a crucial half of the family's religious narrative and political position. This chapter corrects this omission.

We know that the Howards emerged as a family of religious conservatives during the second half of the sixteenth-century, for in 1569 the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk attempted a Catholic rebellion in concert with several of his Howard kin; moreover, the family produced two Catholic martyrs during the later early modern period, St Philip, Earl of Arundel, in 1595, and Blessed William Howard in 1680.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, they have also been collectively understood as religious conservatives during the first half of the century, resisting

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Neville Williams, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964); Graves, 'Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk (1538-1572)', *ODNB*, [accessed 15 December 2012]; Krista J. Kesselring, *The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics and Protest in Elizabethan England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Elzinga, 'Philip Howard [St. Philip Howard], 13<sup>th</sup> earl of Arundel, magnate and alleged traitor', *ODNB* [accessed 15 December 2012]; Philip Holmes, 'William Howard, Viscount Stafford (1612-1680)', *ODNB* [accessed 15 December 2012].



the reformist impulse of the Reformation while conforming to the royal supremacy over the Church. Diarmaid MacCulloch noted in his study of Tudor Suffolk that in 1549 Kett's rebels exhibited no obvious signs of Catholic partisanship, and suggested that this was because they associated traditional religion with 'the disgraced and unlamented Howards'.<sup>3</sup> Karen Stöber likewise associated the family as a whole with the conservative cause in her description of their monastic patronage during the Reformation.<sup>4</sup> As we shall see, the picture of the Howards as religious conservatives during the formative years of the Reformation stems largely from historians' assessments of the Henrician family patriarch, Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk. His apparent conservatism has often coloured the rest of his family. While more recently historians such as Alec Ryrie have understood that Norfolk's religion was not necessarily the model for the rest of the dynasty, stating that Norfolk was 'raising a nest of heretics', these reassessments do not tend to include the women of the Howard family in their analysis - the sole exception to this is Mary, Duchess of Richmond, whose radically reformist views are discussed below.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Christine Peters has shown, the domestic position of women made them central to the performance of their family's religious life; at the most practical level, for instance, women's control over the kitchen meant that they also controlled the mechanics of religious fasting.<sup>6</sup> This chapter introduces the rest of the Howard women, whose religious persuasions remain unstudied, into this narrative. Does the picture of the Howards as religious conservatives alter any further when the family's

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<sup>3</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 167-8.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons: England and Wales, c. 1300-1540* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 178-9.

<sup>5</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 207-13.

<sup>6</sup> Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 156-7.

women are considered – and how does this affect our understanding of the dynasty as a collective whole?

There are, of course, myriad problems raised by attempts to pigeonhole the beliefs of any Henrician individual, largely because such pigeonholes could not then, and cannot now be tidily defined. Historians broadly agree that confessional positions during the 1530s and 40s were by no means as clear or as polarised as they were to become during the reigns of Henry's children.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, both contemporaries and historians have used a wide range of terms to describe what they see as different sets of beliefs. This chapter is not the place for a detailed re-hashing of the language of religious positioning during the Reformation. For the sake of clarity, the prevailing term 'evangelical' will be used here to describe those who not only supported the break with Rome and the royal supremacy, but pursued a reformist agenda beyond this – those who would later be defined as Protestants. 'Conservative' will be used to denote those who, in essence, were not reformers, and maintained a traditional standpoint on the niceties of Catholic worship whether or not they conformed to the royal supremacy; those whom Marshall terms the 'non-evangelical mainstream of English Christians'.<sup>8</sup>

As stated above, the notion that the Howards were a religiously conservative family during Henry VIII's reign has arisen almost entirely from assessments of the position of Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, the family's patriarch. Norfolk is rarely described by either contemporaries or historians as

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<sup>7</sup> For a good overview of this debate, see Marshall, 'Introduction', in *idem*, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England*, pp. 1-16. See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2003); Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003); G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London: Yale University Press, 2005); Eamon Duffy, 'The Reformation After Revisionism', *Renaissance Quarterly* 59:3 (2006), 720-31.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, p. 9.

anything other than conservative; a man who, though he did not openly object to the break with Rome and the royal supremacy, continued to hold traditional views and worship in the traditional way. Michael Graves in the Dictionary of National Biography has called him ‘conservative in religion and consistently hostile to the reformed faith’; for Alec Ryrie, he was ‘England’s leading lay conservative’; for Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘the lay embodiment of traditional religion.’<sup>9</sup> These views come directly from Norfolk’s contemporaries and in many cases from Norfolk himself. Among the most regularly cited anecdotes relating to Norfolk’s conservatism are the Duke’s declaration in 1540 that he had never read the Scriptures and never would, and that ‘it was mery in yngland affore the new lernyng came up’.<sup>10</sup> Likewise in 1540, the Duke’s religion was the subject of a conversation at court between three reformers, among them John Lascelles, the man who would later inform the King’s council of Queen Catherine Howard’s pre-marital affairs. Lascelles related to his two companions how Norfolk had allegedly confronted a man who had married a former nun, and that when the man retorted that religious folk were no more since the King and God had made them free, Norfolk purportedly expostulated ‘by godes body sacred it wyll never owt of my harte as longe as I lyue’.<sup>11</sup> The 1546 inventory of the Duke’s chapel at Kenninghall further underlines his traditionalism in material matters of worship – on the high altar was ‘a ffaire tablet of the birth passion and resurreccion of Christ wrought upon wayne scott Image in alle gilt’.<sup>12</sup> Though by

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<sup>9</sup> Graves, ‘Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk (1473-1554), *magnate and soldier*’, *ODNB* [accessed 16 December 2012]; Ryrie, p. 213; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 243. See also Marshall, p. 11; Childs, pp. 62-3.

<sup>10</sup> TNA SP1/163, fol. 38.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 46.

<sup>12</sup> TNA LR2/117, unfoliated.

no means forbidden during Henry's reign, images were not the mark of a reformer.<sup>13</sup>

Yet conversely, there is an equally significant body of evidence to argue for the tempering of this view of Norfolk as rabidly 'traditional'. His public support for the break with Rome, and his anti-clerical stance, for instance, are well documented. In 1538 Norfolk wrote to Cromwell that 'I thinke Almightye God doth entende no longer to wynke, but to loke brodwaking, aswell on those that do determine themselffes to followe his comawndementes as on those that do determine their desertes, that be bent to followe their olde mumpsimus, and superstitions'.<sup>14</sup> It is clear from the evidence that he supported the King's Great Matter unequivocally, personally entreating the Queen to consent to divorce in 1533 and even, according to Chapuys, claiming that the Pope had no authority over marriage in England regardless of traditional canon law.<sup>15</sup> Thus some historians have asserted - I think correctly - that though Norfolk was not a reformer and favoured traditional worship, he was politically and religiously conformist above all else, his loyalty to the King and the King's wishes taking precedence over any personal piety.<sup>16</sup> Though contemporaries considered Norfolk a religious conservative, it is clear that they were also well aware that political loyalty and religious expediency came first with him. We might perhaps usefully call him a 'conformist conservative'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Images were not officially abolished until the Injunctions of 1547 at the beginning of Edward VI's reign; see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 381 and 450-1.

<sup>14</sup> TNA SP1/131, fol. 108.

<sup>15</sup> *CSP Spain*, IV (ii), 1058, 598.

<sup>16</sup> Marshall, pp. 164-180; Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, pp. 199-200; Head, pp. 113, 263.

<sup>17</sup> The term 'conformist Catholic' has been similarly used by Ethan Shagan to describe non-opponents of the royal supremacy; Peter Marshall has preferred 'conservative' both because it is a contemporary term, and because during the 1530s and 40s everybody was nominally Catholic, and thus it is not the most useful descriptive term. See Shagan, pp. 44-59, and Marshall, Ch. 9, pp. 169-98.

But were Norfolk's views imposed upon, or echoed by, the rest of the Howard family? The religion of his eldest son Henry, Earl of Surrey, has been the subject of much debate, for though raised conservatively, Surrey appears to have embraced the reformist perspective by the time of his death in 1547. His close association with the reformist Earl and Countess of Hertford during the 1540s, and certain of his poems, have been used as evidence for an evangelical leaning.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Surrey's younger brother Thomas was brought before the Privy Council in 1546 for disputing matters of scripture with other men and members of the Queen's household at court.<sup>19</sup> Most pertinent to this study, the duke's daughter, Surrey's sister, Mary, dowager Duchess of Richmond, was arguably the most radically reformist of all Norfolk's children, and there is good reason for Ryrie's statement that conformist conservative Norfolk was 'raising a nest of heretics.'<sup>20</sup> Of our five Howard women, Mary is the one for whom most evidence survives regarding religious practice and persuasion during this period and beyond it, and it all points unequivocally to a deeply evangelical outlook. This is not entirely surprising. Born in 1519, Mary was still a child when the break with Rome took place; she had never known the old, medieval, Catholic Church as an adult. Moreover, she had spent her adolescence at the evangelical court of Queen Anne Boleyn.<sup>21</sup> Exposed to these influences during her formative years, Mary was of the first reformist generation, and as Susan Brigden and Alexandra Walsham have shown, younger people tended to take up the

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<sup>18</sup> Brigden, 'Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League'', pp. 507-37; Ryrie, pp. 207-10; Childs, pp. 144, 196.

<sup>19</sup> *APC*, I, p. 408.

<sup>20</sup> Ryrie, p. 213.

<sup>21</sup> See M. Dowling, 'Anne Boleyn and Reform', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), 30-46; Ives, pp. 26-76.

evangelical cause with far more enthusiasm than their older relatives.<sup>22</sup> Jessie Childs has also been suggested that Norfolk's traditionalism may have provided a spur to his children's religious rebellion.<sup>23</sup>

Mary did not simply lean towards the evangelical; she actively espoused reformist sentiments and associated closely with those who did likewise. Susan Brigden has shown that during the winter of 1539-40 she 'practically lived' with the reformist Seymours, Earl and Countess of Hertford, at their house Beauchamp Place in London.<sup>24</sup> Though not a lady-in-waiting, she was a regular visitor to Catherine Parr's court during the 1540s, and received gifts from the Queen when she was not present.<sup>25</sup> During these years she also quarrelled with her brother the Earl of Surrey regarding her reading of scripture. In her deposition taken for her brother's treason trial in 1546 (now lost, but seen in the seventeenth-century by Henry VIII's first biographer Lord Herbert of Cherbury) Mary told how her brother had tried to dissuade her from 'going too far' in the reading of the scripture.<sup>26</sup> The King's Book of 1543 had greatly restricted women's reading of the Bible in English, permitting only noblewomen to do this, and only alone in private, not in groups for discussion; it is possible that Mary was ignoring this last rule.<sup>27</sup>

After her father's imprisonment, the sequestration of the family home at Kenninghall, and the accession of Edward VI in 1546-7, Mary's reformist religion became all the more prominent. In 1547 she gained custody of her

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<sup>22</sup> Susan Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present* 95:1 (1982), 37-67; Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation of the Generations: Youth, Age and Religious Change in England, c. 1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 21 (2011), pp. 92-121.

<sup>23</sup> Childs, p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> Brigden, 'Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League'', p. 525.

<sup>25</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian C XIV, fol. 107v; TNA SP1/195, fol. 173.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Herbert, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *The Life and Reign of Henry the Eighth* (London, 1672), p. 627.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Lloyd (ed.), *Formularies of Faith Put Forth by Authority During the Reign of Henry VIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), pp. 213-376.

brother Surrey's children from their previous temporary guardian Lord Wentworth.<sup>28</sup> She is said to have been living at Mountjoy House in London at this time, from whence she patronised John Foxe, the Protestant martyrologist. This detail stems from Simeon Foxe's 1611 biography of his father; he stated that in 1548 Foxe received an invitation to attend on Mary at her London residence of Mountjoy House, and was then offered the position of tutor to the children.<sup>29</sup> Mary also harboured the reformist exile John Bale at Mountjoy House immediately on his return from exile in 1547.<sup>30</sup> It is possible that Mary already knew Bale before his exile in 1539, for Bale, a Suffolk man, had been the stipendiary priest at Thorndon in Suffolk immediately prior to this, and Thorndon was less than twenty miles away from both Framlingham and Kenninghall.<sup>31</sup> The extent of Mary's patronage becomes apparent from letters that she wrote from Stepney in 1549. She asked Principal Secretary Sir Thomas Smith for licenses to allow Dr King of Norwich, Thomas Some (or Solme), and John Huntingdon to preach.<sup>32</sup> These men had reputations as radical evangelicals.<sup>33</sup> Smith evidently responded negatively towards the latter, and Mary then wrote in no uncertain terms, demanding that Smith withdraw his 'evell opynion' of Huntingdon and stating that 'I am assured he is not only off a godly commorsarye but allso wt lerneynge & eloquens abell to edyfy his audytory'.<sup>34</sup> Mary did not espouse the

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<sup>28</sup> *CPR Ed VI*, IV, p. 237.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Freeman, 'John Foxe: a biography', *The Acts and Monuments Online*, [www.johnfoxe.org](http://www.johnfoxe.org) [accessed 3 February 2013].

<sup>30</sup> John N. King, 'John Bale (1495-1563), bishop of Ossory, evangelical polemicist, and historian', *ODNB* [accessed 3 February 2013]; Nicholas Lesse (trans.), *The twelfe steppes of abuses write[n] by the famus doctor S. Augustine translated out of laten by Nicolas Lesse, EEBO* [accessed 3 February 2013], dedication (p. 3-4).

<sup>31</sup> King, 'John Bale', *ODNB* [accessed 3 February 2013].

<sup>32</sup> TNA SP10/7, fol. 1.

<sup>33</sup> See Whitney R. D. Jones, 'Thomas Solme [Some], protestant divine', *ODNB* [accessed 16 December 2012], and 'John Huntingdon' in Glossary of *Acts and Monuments Online*, <http://www.johnfoxe.org> [accessed 16 December 2012].

<sup>34</sup> TNA SP10/7, no. 3.

new religion quietly: she was actively, vocally evangelical and this must be taken into account when considering the religious position of the Howard dynasty as a whole during this period.

In 1550 she moved to her half-uncle Lord William Howard's manor of Reigate with the children and their new tutor Foxe.<sup>35</sup> During this period Foxe began work on his *Book of Martyrs*, and Mary continued to patronise reformist writers. In 1550 Nicholas Lesse dedicated his *St. Augustine's Twelve Steppes of Abuse* to Mary, the which dedication states not only that Mary was desirous for such works to 'come in to [the] handes of [the] people', but that John Bale was her go-between with Lesse, and that the radical printer John Day was considered to be 'hers', as she had 'ofte[n] times... com[mun]ed' with him concerning the bringing of reformist literature to the masses.<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Evenden has argued that this suggests that Mary's patronage of Day began before 1550.<sup>37</sup> The evangelical writer Thomas Becon also dedicated a collection of prayers, 'The Castell of Comforte', likewise printed by Day, to Mary c. 1550.<sup>38</sup> It is important to emphasise the extremely vigorous nature of Mary's religious patronage. She was not only passively receiving dedications from Protestant writers, but had John Foxe writing what would arguably become the most influential Protestant text of the early modern period in her household, and was moreover actively working with printers to secure the publishing of reformist texts for ordinary literate people, promoting and evangelising her religious beliefs. Mary was one

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<sup>35</sup> Reigate had been granted by Henry VIII to Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, as part of her jointure in 1540 (*LP XV*, 498, III, c.80). It then passed to her stepson the Duke of Norfolk, and was granted to his half-brother Lord William Howard in 1550 (H. E. Malden (ed.), *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 3*, [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk) [accessed 3 February 2013]).

<sup>36</sup> See 'Fitzroy (Howard), Mary', in Franklin B. Williams, Jr., *Index of Dedications and Commendatory Verses in English Books before 1641* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1962); Lesse, *Twelve Steppes*, *EEBO* (pp. 3-4); Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage: John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *Index of Dedications*.



of a select group of noblewomen who were particularly active in this regard, including Katherine Willoughby-Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, Anne Stanhope-Seymour, Duchess of Somerset, and Queen Catherine Parr herself.<sup>39</sup> Mary's efforts therefore place her within the most active, most influential, and most highly sought-after female aristocratic evangelicals during this period, and this clearly shows that the Howards were not collectively conservative.

The accession of Mary I in 1553 was therefore presumably less than advantageous for Mary. However, little evidence survives as to her activities during this year. We know that she did not go into exile abroad like many of her author protégées and some other female aristocratic evangelicals, and at first glance this appears odd; Mary had been incredibly prominent in evangelical patronage and it is clear that her strong religious views were at odds with those of the new Queen.<sup>40</sup> However, Mary's situation was somewhat different from other noble patronesses because she had remained unmarried following her early widowhood in 1536. Most women who went into exile went alongside their husbands and families; Mary did not have this support.<sup>41</sup> It therefore seems likely that Mary had no option but to stay in England. Her father's release from the Tower of London spelt the end of John Foxe as tutor to the young Howards: in August 1553 Norfolk sacked Foxe and placed his eldest grandson Thomas in the household of conservative Bishop Stephen Gardiner.<sup>42</sup> Foxe went into exile, and

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<sup>39</sup> See John N King, 'Patronage and Piety: The Influence of Catherine Parr', in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 43-60; Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community*.

<sup>40</sup> John Foxe, John Bale, Thomas Becon, John Huntingdon, and possibly Thomas Some all fled into exile on the continent after 1553. So did Katherine Willoughby-Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, Katherine Willoughby-Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, went with her new husband Peregrine Bertie and their children; Katherine Carey-Knollys with her husband Sir Francis Knollys.

<sup>42</sup> Freeman, 'John Foxe: a biography', *Acts and Monuments Online*; Graves, 'Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk', *ODNB* [accessed 3 February 2013].

Mary's patronage appears to have ceased. Mary herself appears to have retired into seclusion after this date; very little more is heard of her until her death sometime in 1555.

Her reforming zeal clearly shows that the Howard women did not all reflect the alleged conservatism of their patriarch, and that we cannot consider the Howards as a unified family group in this regard. However, the religion of the other four women of this study is far less clear-cut than Mary's, which paints an interesting picture of the Howard women's survival instincts during this period. None of the other four found themselves in any trouble with the authorities regarding religion, which in itself makes it difficult to chart their sensibilities. Three of our women did, however, leave wills.

Wills have been much-maligned; it has been rightly said by many historians that they simply are not reliable sources for religious preference, because the preamble, the part most likely to contain a statement of religion, was largely formulaic and often chosen by the scribe rather than the testator.<sup>43</sup> Preambles were also often chosen for the sake of conformity rather than as an overt personal statement. Nevertheless, some historians have reasserted the value of wills for this purpose, particularly for literate laity who were less likely to rely on a scribe to insert an appropriate preamble since they were well able to compose their own.<sup>44</sup> Noblewomen undoubtedly fall into this category. Wills have survived for Agnes Tylney-Howard, dowager Duchess of Norfolk in 1542; Katherine Howard-ap Rhys-Daubeney, Countess of Bridgwater, in 1554; and

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<sup>43</sup> See J. D. Alsop, 'Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40:1 (1989), 19-27.

<sup>44</sup> J. Craig and C. Litzenger, 'Wills as Religious Propaganda: The Testament of William Tracy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993), 415-31; Peters, pp. 160-3.

Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, in 1558.<sup>45</sup> Those of Agnes and Katherine both use what are termed by Litzenberger and Peters as ‘neutral’ preambles. Both commended their souls to Almighty God; they did not refer to the Virgin and the holy company of Heaven on the one hand, or to assurance of salvation by God alone on the other, examples of traditionally ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ preambles respectively.<sup>46</sup> This is unsurprising for Agnes in 1542, but more so for Katherine in the first year of Mary’s reign, 1554, when more strongly ‘Catholic’ preambles were once more in vogue. Elizabeth, on the other hand, did include a traditional preamble in November 1558, bequeathing her soul ‘to almightie god to oure lady seynt marye and to all the blessed companye of heaven’.<sup>47</sup> Her will was written on 30 November, very shortly after Elizabeth I’s accession and before her religious settlement, which could mean that Elizabeth was simply conforming to ‘the norm’ of Mary’s Catholic reign. The rest of her will is not particularly traditional; she does not make bequests for prayers for souls, nor to any church or clergyman. This means that in Elizabeth’s case the preamble may not hold much significance and cannot be used as proof of her religious beliefs.

Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, on the other hand, did leave ‘my best chalice of siluer and gilte with the patten’ to ‘my chapple at Lambith’; she also left ‘twoo siluer spones’ to John Rabon, ‘channtery priste of Lambithe’.<sup>48</sup> It is often assumed in the absence of much evidence that women of Agnes’ generation – she was born c. 1477, and thus lived most of her life under the ‘old’ church – were strongly conservative, attached irrevocably to the church of their

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<sup>45</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596; PROB 10/27; PROB 11/42A/285.

<sup>46</sup> Peters, p. 162.

<sup>47</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285.

<sup>48</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596.

upbringing. Indeed, Lacey Baldwin Smith has somewhat surprisingly described Agnes herself as 'rigidly religious, balancing the sins of her youth with a hair-shirt in the twilight of her life'.<sup>49</sup> Smith provides no evidence for his startling assertions and I have likewise found none. The evidence that does survive suggests nothing more than quiet conformity, perhaps with overtones of traditionalism. We have seen that she left silver spoons to her chantry priest; she did not, however, explicitly set him to pray for her own and her family's souls. Agnes was active on behalf of her chaplains throughout the 1530s, attempting to secure lucrative benefices for them, but this was not unusual for noblewomen of any religious persuasion. The fact that none of her priests were brought before the authorities for any kind of heresy likewise suggests that they were conformists.<sup>50</sup> Her attempts in 1535 to secure the benefice of Sherington in the diocese of Lincoln for her priest Christopher Rookes did cause distress to John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, but this appears to have been because Cromwell sponsored the appointment without regard for Lincoln's ownership of the advowson, and because Rookes was 'but a bare clerke and of slendre lereyng', not because of his religious persuasion.<sup>51</sup> Before the dissolution, Agnes had patronised Thetford Priory, the family's preferred burial place.<sup>52</sup> The priory's register, which has survived, shows that in the late 1530s the prior, William Ixworth, wrote to Agnes at Lambeth to ask her to continue her patronage as he feared the priory would be suppressed unless she continued to work to prevent

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Catherine Howard*, p. 47.

<sup>50</sup> TNA SP1/76, fol. 109; BL Harl. MS 6148, fol 32; TNA SP1/95, fol. 102.

<sup>51</sup> TNA SP1/96, fol. 136.

<sup>52</sup> During the 1520s she kept up a close relationship with the priory through visits and other patronage; see *The Register of Thetford Priory*, 2 vols, ed. by David Dymond, *Norfolk Record Society* 59 and 60 (1996).

it.<sup>53</sup> There is no evidence that Agnes took on this role; yet again, all that can be said with certainty is that she conformed.

Her daughter Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, also appears to have conformed, since no concrete evidence of her religious persuasion survives. Her will contains no religious bequests.<sup>54</sup> Her second husband Henry Daubeney, whom she divorced in 1536, also appears to have been conformist, since there is little evidence of his beliefs beyond the fact that he was among the twelve peers who signed the edict for the suppression of the monasteries in 1536.<sup>55</sup> In the last years of her life Katherine is found living in a house on the Lambeth estate of the reformist Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer; but choosing to rent a house from a Protestant is hardly evidence of Protestantism in herself.<sup>56</sup> As this thesis has shown, Katherine was not backwards in coming forwards and it seems likely that if she had strong religious convictions, she would not have hesitated to reveal them.

This is the same for Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk. Although her will included a traditional preamble, there is no other evidence that she was strongly conservative. Indeed, she appears to have been very anxious to stay out of any kind of trouble regarding heresy. In 1539 she wrote in haste to Cromwell to relate a series of events that had led to her imprisonment of her own priest in the bailey of her house.<sup>57</sup> The letter states that she had asked her priest, Master William, whether he would fast during the coming Lent; he had replied that he had fasted since childhood, but that he ‘wold nat ffast thys lent tyll he dyde se a new world’. Elizabeth claimed to have rebuked him and asked what he

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

<sup>54</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

<sup>55</sup> Daubeney, pp. 193-4.

<sup>56</sup> Allen, p. 439.

<sup>57</sup> TNA SP1/144, fol. 16.

meant by this new world; he replied ‘a nother wey’. Taking alarm, Elizabeth sent for the Archdeacon of St Albans and the local Justice of the Peace and had the priest put into the bailey. A search of his belongings turned up a ‘booke of juyggelyng’, about which she became even more alarmed. The *OED* tells us that juggling in an early modern context meant the art of deceit or trickery, and was often used in a religious context to mean religious falsehood, closely associated with sorcery.<sup>58</sup> When the book came to light, the local JP advised Elizabeth to send the man to Cromwell, and at the end of her letter she hurriedly added that ‘one specyall cause which I hadd forgotton whiche put me most in dredde that my pr[ies]t dyd say before my servant when I hadde takon the booke of juyggelyng frome hym he said he wold nat for nothyng it shuld be knowen ffrom thens the boke dyd come’.<sup>59</sup> Clearly the book was heretical in some sense, and Elizabeth was afraid that she would come under suspicion for harbouring such a man. This strongly suggests that her chief aim was religious conformity.

Anne, dowager Countess of Oxford, daughter of Agnes and sister of Katherine and Norfolk, was somewhat more active in religious matters, but intriguingly the evidence swings in both conservative and more evangelical directions. Aside from Mary, Anne was the only one of the Howard women to benefit financially from the dissolution of the monasteries by securing rents and even monastic property itself. This did not happen by chance; Anne deliberately wrote to Cromwell in 1536 to ask for the convent of Blackborough in Norfolk, of which she was also patroness, or if that was unacceptable, the house of Schouldam nearby.<sup>60</sup> The evidence does not show whether she secured Blackborough, but we know that Schouldham remained in crown hands until

<sup>58</sup> *OED*, <http://www.oed.com> [accessed 16 December 2012].

<sup>59</sup> TNA SP1/144, fol. 16.

<sup>60</sup> TNA SP1/102, fol. 121.

1553, when it was sold to Thomas Mildmay.<sup>61</sup> She did, however, secure the reversion and rent of the manor of Nosterfeld, formerly of the priory of Hatfield Regis in Essex, in 1538, which was worth £10 20s.<sup>62</sup> The purchase of monastic property does not necessarily mean that Anne was of an evangelical persuasion; a number of supposedly conservative peers, including the Duke of Norfolk, also rushed to augment their estates in this way. However, in 1536 Anne also sent her chaplain, William Cutler, to Cromwell with a book ‘for ye instruction of ignorant people’ against the Bishop of Rome which he had written, which may suggest that she followed her brother Norfolk in an anti-papal, anti-clerical stance.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, all that this really demonstrates is conformity to the King’s own position; anti-clericalism was not a mark of religious extremity.

Conversely, however, in the same year she also became involved alongside Norfolk in the eradication of evangelical preaching in East Anglia. According to a letter written by Thomas Dorset, vicar of St Margaret’s Lothbury, London, to the Mayor of Plymouth in 1536, ‘one Lambert’ – John Lambert, formerly Nicholson – ‘was detect of heresy’ for declaring that it was a sin to pray to saints.<sup>64</sup> The detection, according to Dorset, had come from the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Essex, and Anne, the dowager Countess of Oxford, who had collectively written to three different bishops about Lambert. Dorset stated that ‘men suppose they handelid hym so to please theym [Norfolk, Essex, and Anne] to grate favor’.<sup>65</sup> This shows that although Anne might actively promote literature against the Pope, she was also active in maintaining the tradition of

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<sup>61</sup> William Page (ed.), ‘House of Gilbertines: The priory of Shouldham’, in *Norfolk*, ed. by Blomefield, II, pp. 412-414.

<sup>62</sup> *LP* XIII, (ii), 1182 (18e).

<sup>63</sup> TNA SP1/113, fol. 151.

<sup>64</sup> BL Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fols. 131-2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 131-2.

praying to saints, and denouncing those who thought otherwise. It is striking that in this matter she acted alongside her brother Norfolk, whose religion appears to have followed a remarkably similar pattern during this period. As we saw earlier, Norfolk and Anne had previously collaborated closely concerning Anne's marital and jointure problems with the de Vere Earls of Oxford, and they appear to have enjoyed a close relationship. Whether Anne copied her brother's religious activities, or whether the two simply coincided is impossible to tell; however, in this sole instance it does appear that the patriarch's sympathies did colour those of his relatives.

This chapter has demonstrated that the women of the Howard family – excepting Mary, Duchess of Richmond – were consistently conformist during the reign of Henry VIII and beyond it. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the women of this study, again excepting Mary, were either strongly conservative or strongly evangelical, even when the flexibility of these terms are taken into consideration. None of them ever found themselves in trouble with any authority regarding religious practice or preference, nor did their contemporaries single them out as overtly religious in any direction. I would argue that this is not simply due to a lack of surviving evidence, since it is highly likely that a record of religious non-conformity in any direction would have survived in some form. In some cases, particularly that of Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, it is clear that they were openly concerned to appear conformist. By comparison with Mary, Duchess of Richmond, the religious activity of the rest of the Howard women was negligible. This places them in a different religious context to the family patriarch Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, for though Norfolk, as a political realist, was also conformist, the evidence shows that he had definite conservative



leanings and was actively involved in a number of religious concerns. Thus it is clear that the Howards were not unified in religious matters; we cannot refer to 'the conservative Howards' during Henry VIII's reign with accuracy. This becomes doubly clear when the radically evangelical beliefs of Mary, Duchess of Richmond – Norfolk's own daughter – are taken into consideration.

What implications does this have for our understanding of these women and of the operation of the Howard dynasty as a whole? Firstly, the contrast between Mary's evangelicalism and the quiet conformity of the others serves to highlight the importance of generational differences during these crucial years for religious reform. Mary was the youngest of the five and the only one whose adolescence fell during the 1530s; though there were generational gaps between several of the other four Howard women, these clearly did not have the same religious impact, and this supports the findings of Brigden and more recently Walsham regarding the role of young people in the Reformation.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, it adds to our understanding of intrafamilial relationships within the Howard dynasty. It is striking that the only one of the five women who appeared to follow the religious preferences of the Duke of Norfolk was his half-sister Anne, Countess of Oxford. As previous chapters have shown, the two enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship elsewhere in their lives and this contrasted sharply with the antagonistic relationship between Norfolk and some of the other women of this study.<sup>67</sup> This might suggest a two-way street between personal relationships and religious practice. Thirdly, again setting Mary aside, it seems clear that for most of the Howard women, survival was more important than

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<sup>66</sup> Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation'; Walsham, 'The Reformation of the Generations'.

<sup>67</sup> Notably his daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, and half-sister Katherine, Countess of Bridgewater.

religious practice and that this became increasingly clear as the 1530s progressed. As the cases of Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, in 1534 and then Anne Askew in 1546 showed, gender was no protection against accusations of heresy. The Howard women might incite political rebellion or disobey the government's requests where they related to other areas of their lives, but they were clearly not prepared to court the death sentence for heresy. In this there is a sense of family strategy; none of the Howard family lost their lives to charges of heresy during this reign.

This in itself provides an interesting contrast with the impression of some of these women as intractable and ungovernable, as shown in previous chapters. As we have seen, there is no evidence that any of their various rebellions against family and state were strongly inspired by religion. This is particularly noteworthy in Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater's case; most other noblewomen involved in violent rebellion against the Crown were, at least in part, religiously motivated. While it is ordinarily extremely difficult and often fruitless to attempt to separate religious and political motivation during this period, the evidence appears to suggest that this was the case for some of the Howard women, and this is an important insight into their agency. It is possible that their quarrel was not explicitly with the Crown's policy of religious change, but with patriarchal authority, whether in the form of male relatives, Crown officials, or legal and social constraints. This demonstrates the degree to which these women were more concerned with political, rather than religious, agency, and this may be why they had such impact on their family's political fortunes. This study therefore provides valuable reasons for investigating the religious and political activities of other early modern noblewomen within a familial context.

### **Epilogue: The Fall of the Howards, 1546-7, and Beyond**

The end of Henry VIII's reign was a catastrophic occasion for the Howard dynasty, so much so that it is traditionally termed 'the fall of the Howards'. The Duke of Norfolk, family patriarch, and his eldest son Henry, Earl of Surrey, were accused of high treason, imprisoned in the Tower, and convicted on a charge of heraldry in December 1546. Surrey was executed on 19 January 1547 and Norfolk's death warrant was signed by the King on 27 January.<sup>1</sup> He was saved by the death of the King only one day later, and remained imprisoned and attainted until 1553. This momentous event has formed the subject of detailed analyses by Diarmaid MacCullough and Susan Brigden among others, seeking to uncover the whys and wherefores of such a thorough and unusual attack against a noble dynasty.<sup>2</sup> However, these studies tend to focus on the men accused and their male familial context. This epilogue places the spotlight on the women involved. This allows us to round out the narrative of this crucial event for the Howards, which is particularly important as it set the tone for the family's fortunes until the reign of Mary I began in 1553.

The combined treason cases of the Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Norfolk are considered one of the best examples of the elasticity of the treason law, and of the tyranny of a paranoid king, for the charge for which both men were convicted was one of heraldry. They were accused of wrongly

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<sup>1</sup> Childs, p. 311; *LP* XXI (II), 761.

<sup>2</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, "'Vain, proud, foolish boy": The Earl of Surrey and the Fall of the Howards' in *Rivals in Power: Lives and Letters of the Great Tudor Dynasties*, ed. by David Starkey (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1990), pp. 86-113; Brigden, 'Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the 'Conjured League'', pp. 507-37; Peter R. Moore, 'The Heraldic Charge against the Earl of Surrey, 1546-7', *EHR* 116 (2001), 557-83. Norfolk and Surrey's biographers have also discussed this: see Head, pp. 221-8; Casady, pp. 184-221; Sessions, pp. 352-87; Childs, pp. 269-313; Cherbury, pp. 623-32; Scarisbrick, pp. 482-4; Murphy, pp. 231-6; Loades, *Intrigue and Treason*, pp. 493-6.

appropriating elements of the royal arms into their own, an act which was construed as a bid for the throne itself. It is generally accepted that the heraldic charge was spurious and had been created in order to secure their destruction, since, as Moore's detailed study points out, 'heraldic concerns' had not formed part of the initial investigation but were added later as a means to an end.<sup>3</sup> There have been various theories as to the 'real' reason behind their arrest but this remains shadowy. MacCulloch has described it as the reaction of a paranoid King to an apparent threat to the succession; Head has blamed the working of a court faction, largely led by the Seymours, designed to remove Norfolk from the regency during the Edward VI's imminent reign.<sup>4</sup> Childs has remarked on Surrey's own foolishness in displaying any royal arms at a time when the King was suspicious of threats to the succession, and has noted his military incompetence and brash boasting during the 1540s as a likely cause.<sup>5</sup> Quite likely it was a mixture of all these, and attempts at lengthy reinterpretation are beyond the scope of this chapter. What is most significant for this study is the role played by Mary, Duchess of Richmond, and Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, during this episode.

The sources for Mary's involvement are limited to the reports made by John Gates, Sir Richard Southwell and Wymond Carew, who examined Mary at Kenninghall shortly after her father's arrest on 12 December 1546; surviving depositions taken from courtiers Gawen Carew and Edward Rogers, and Howard servants Hugh Ellis and Richard Fulmerston; a record of Mary's own deposition, which is now lost but was seen by Henry VIII's seventeenth-century biographer Lord Herbert of Cherbury; and an account in the contemporary *Chronicle of King*

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<sup>3</sup> Moore, pp. 559-60.

<sup>4</sup> MacCulloch, "Vain, proud, foolish boy", p. 109; Head, pp. 223-8.

<sup>5</sup> Childs, pp. 264-5, 286.

*Henry VIII of England*.<sup>6</sup> Until recently Mary was vilified by contemporaries and historians such as MacCulloch, Brigden and Sessions for knowingly producing damning evidence which was then used in the trial against both her brother and father.<sup>7</sup> However, more recently Beverley Murphy has argued that Mary actually did her best to protect both her father and brother, and that she should not be blamed for failing to succeed where her brother was concerned.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth's actions on her husband's arrest are also shrouded in some doubt; Cherbury claimed that she had deposed against him, but Norfolk himself wrote that Elizabeth knew nothing to incriminate him since they did not live together.<sup>9</sup> What role, then, did the women play in the fall of the Howards?

When Surrey and Norfolk were arrested on 12 December 1546, Mary was at Kenninghall, the family base in Norfolk. She was still there when John Gates, Sir Richard Southwell and Wymond Carew arrived in the early hours of 14 December. They found Mary and the Duke's mistress, Elizabeth Holland, 'newlie risen and not redie'.<sup>10</sup> The councillors had been sent by the King to bring news of the arrests, to search the property, and question those inside.<sup>11</sup> Though MacCulloch has said of Norfolk's immediate family that 'never was there less domestic love anywhere', Mary's reaction suggests otherwise. The councillors stated that she appeared 'sore perplexed fumleng and lik to fall downe'.<sup>12</sup> The women were told that they would be questioned and advised to cooperate. According to their report, Mary stated that she would not hide anything from

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<sup>6</sup> TNA SP1/227, fols. 82-3, 88, 90-3, 97-115; Cherbury, pp. 626-33; *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, trans. Martin A. S. Hume (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), pp. 142-7.

<sup>7</sup> *Chronicle of King Henry VIII*, pp. 142-7; Cherbury, pp. 626-8; MacCulloch, p. 87; Sessions, pp. 350-93; Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', p. 536.

<sup>8</sup> Murphy, pp. 232-7; Murphy, 'Mary Fitzroy [née Howard], duchess of Richmond (c. 1519-?1555), *noblewoman*', *ODNB* [accessed 29 January 2013].

<sup>9</sup> Cherbury, p. 626; BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 101.

<sup>10</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 82-3.

<sup>12</sup> MacCulloch, p. 87; TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

them, 'specellie if it be of weight'; she would set everything down 'as it shall fall in her remembrance which she hath promised for the better declaration of her integrity to exhibit in writing unto your highness'.<sup>13</sup>

This shows that Mary did indeed answer questions, and produced a deposition in her own hand. This was most probably sent to the council; however, it has not survived. Neither have several others, notably that of Elizabeth Holland, the Duke's mistress.<sup>14</sup> Our knowledge of these depositions comes solely from the seventeenth-century account of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who saw the depositions before they were lost. Since his is not a direct transcription, we are reliant on his own construction of their words which is why it is difficult to uncover the true value of their evidence. According to Cherbury, a key point of Mary's deposition was her relation of her father's second attempt to marry her to Sir Thomas Seymour in 1546, and her brother's reaction to this. Mary had declined the match. According to courtier Gawain Carew in his deposition, she did so because 'her fantasie [fantasy] would not serve to marry w<sup>th</sup> him'.<sup>15</sup> Surrey, hearing of the match, allegedly told Mary that instead of refusing outright, she ought instead to have prevaricated, using the time to inveigle her way into the King's affections so that she might become his mistress, and 'beare as great a stroke about him as Madame de Castaigne doth about the French king'.<sup>16</sup> If Surrey seriously suggested this, it shows that there was indeed a notion of 'family strategy' among the Howards when it came to arranging political gain.

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<sup>13</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 88.

<sup>14</sup> Cherbury, pp. 626-7.

<sup>15</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 105.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 104-104v.

Surrey's apologists have argued that this was a sarcastic suggestion and that Mary should not have taken him seriously. Casady even argued in 1938 that it was Mary's enthusiasm for the marriage which brought Surrey's dislike of the Seymours to the fore and caused him to wax sarcastic.<sup>17</sup> Surrey's hatred of the Seymours is often cited, but as Brigden notes, during the late 1530s Surrey had been a frequent guest at their home of Beauchamp Place and this does not denote active dislike.<sup>18</sup> According to Cherbury, Mary's deposition stated that Surrey actually wanted Mary to marry Seymour, in order that she might get closer to the King.<sup>19</sup> As Childs has argued, it seems unlikely that Mary misinterpreted Surrey's words; as this thesis has shown, she was not stupid.<sup>20</sup> Rather, it appears to give evidence to her statement that her brother was 'a rasshe man'.<sup>21</sup> Horrified by his suggestion, Mary expressed her disgust in no uncertain terms. Carew deposed that she had said 'they should perushe & she would cutt her own troate rather then she would consent to such a villany'.<sup>22</sup>

Mary further deposed that she had recently quarrelled with Surrey because he had discouraged her from 'going too far' in reading the Scriptures. These two quarrels have been taken by Brigden as evidence that 'Surrey and his sister grew to hate one another.'<sup>23</sup> Yet two quarrels, between two evidently passionate characters, do not necessarily suggest that the two were bosom enemies. As Murphy has pointed out, Mary was close enough to her brother to make him steward of some of her lands.<sup>24</sup> Mary also deposed that her brother

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<sup>17</sup> Casady, pp. 179-80, 197-9. See also Murphy, pp. 231-2.

<sup>18</sup> Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', p. 525.

<sup>19</sup> Cherbury, p. 627.

<sup>20</sup> Childs, p. 262.

<sup>21</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 104-106v.

<sup>23</sup> Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', p. 522.

<sup>24</sup> Murphy, p. 235.

hated all ‘new’ men and various members of the King’s privy council, and she repeated several ‘passionate words’ and ‘circumstantial speeches’ of Surrey’s which Cherbury described as ‘little for his advantage’.<sup>25</sup> When questioned about his heraldry, she responded that she thought he had more than seven rolls of arms, that he had resumed the Stafford arms of their grandfather, and that the crown above them, in her judgement, looked like a close crown.<sup>26</sup> These confidences have been taken as evidence of her complicity with the government in attempting to destroy her father and brother.

Though Cherbury included many examples of Mary’s deposition, he stopped short of actually blaming Mary alone for her family’s arrests. The *Spanish Chronicle* had no such scruples, and is the only contemporary source to do so.<sup>27</sup> Uniquely, it centres on the issue of a painting of Surrey which allegedly included the forbidden arms. Surrey was unable to keep the painting a secret from his sister, who, after railing at him, went straight to the King and told him of it, advising him to ask Surrey’s intention. The King followed her advice and shortly arrested Surrey. At this point Mary is supposed to have returned to the King to inform him that her father also knew of the painting, thereby securing his arrest as well. This source, however, may not have been strictly contemporary as the earliest manuscript copy is dated 1556. Moreover, its translator, Martin Hume, stated that the author was not a courtier or a noble with access to court, but probably a merchant, or a mercenary soldier.<sup>28</sup> This is doubtless why the

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<sup>25</sup> Cherbury, p. 628.

<sup>26</sup> Cherbury, pp. 627-8. The following refers to this account.

<sup>27</sup> *Chronicle of Henry VIII*, pp. 142-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xv-xx.



Chronicle is hardly referred to in historians' accounts of the fall of the Howards.<sup>29</sup>

The Chronicle's version of events certainly seems unlikely in view of Mary's shocked response to the arrests when informed on 14 December.<sup>30</sup> Further, there is no evidence to suggest that Mary was at court and able to speak to the King in the winter months of 1546. The *Spanish Chronicle*'s account states that she had gone to the King twice, but the journey from Kenninghall, in deepest Norfolk, was not a quick one and was unlikely to be taken by a woman on a whim. Furthermore, this issue of the painting made no appearance in the depositions, the charges, or the trial. Whatever Mary may have said in her deposition, she almost certainly did not deliberately inform the King of her brother's use of arms in a painting.

Was Mary responsible for providing other evidence which convicted her father and brother? Let us first deal with her father, the Duke of Norfolk. On 14 December she told the three councillors that nature constrained her to love her father, 'whom she hathe ever thought to bie a trew and faithfull subject.'<sup>31</sup> Cherbury was of the opinion that the evidence Mary gave was designed to exonerate her father of any treasonable word or act that they might bring against him: he stated that she reported many 'passionate words' of her brother's, which were not to his advantage, but 'did much to clear the father'.<sup>32</sup> She said that her father was not worried about any ill-will from the Seymours or other new nobility, saying that 'His truth should bear him out', and that he had never said

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<sup>29</sup> The exception to this is Sessions, p. 350.

<sup>30</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 82.

<sup>32</sup> Cherbury, p. 627.

that the King hated him.<sup>33</sup> Murphy argues that Mary knew that the execution of her father, not her brother, was the council's real aim, and that she was trying to protect him.<sup>34</sup> She had every reason for doing so. A cynic might note that her refusal to marry Sir Thomas Seymour meant that she was still a single widow, and her continual sales of land during the 1540s imply that she was not very well-off.<sup>35</sup> If her father was executed, Mary would lose her source of financial support and accommodation. She might even have to marry Sir Thomas Seymour after all. Mary's statement to the councillors that 'nature constrained her soore to loove her father' does not sound as though they were particularly close.<sup>36</sup>

For whatever reason, it appears clear that Mary did not seek to condemn her father, but rather to save him. But did she actively seek to bring down her brother, since the evidence she gave could certainly be construed in this way? Beverley Murphy, as I have said, does not think so. She points out that none of the evidence provided by Mary was used directly to convict Surrey, and that much of it was simply examples of name-calling and could not have been used in a trial in any case.<sup>37</sup> Concerning Mary's report on Surrey's heraldry, Murphy writes that her statements were vague, and argues that 'the daughter of a duke...might be expected to be more knowledgeable about her own family crests'.<sup>38</sup> She notes that according to Cherbury's record, Mary continually caveated her responses, stating that something looked so 'in her judgement', rather than that it was so.<sup>39</sup> She also argues that the damning information about the Seymour match was not initially volunteered by Mary, because it had already

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<sup>33</sup> Cherbury, p. 628.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy, p. 235.

<sup>35</sup> *LP* XIX (ii), 690; *LP* XX (i), 624 (15); *LP* XXI (i), 1383 (110).

<sup>36</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

<sup>37</sup> Murphy, pp. 233-4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

been revealed by Carew and Rogers.<sup>40</sup> According to Murphy, therefore, Mary's actions have been misconstrued.

Yet it may be that some of the evidence she gave did accidentally help to condemn him. Murphy states that the information regarding Surrey's reaction to the Seymour match was first revealed by Carew and Rogers.<sup>41</sup> In fact, we do not know this for sure; it is not clear when, precisely, Mary was examined, whether it was in Kenninghall on 14 or 15 December, or in London after this. The depositions of Carew and others are not dated, and indeed Cherbury relates Mary's evidence before theirs, which might suggest that she was examined first. It is true that this evidence did not inform the heraldry charge eventually used to convict Surrey, but it was referred to in the trial and Surrey evidently thought it had an impact on the verdict: he allegedly exclaimed 'must I, then, be condemned on the word of a wretched woman?'.<sup>42</sup> Mary's evidence regarding Surrey's heraldry, as given by Cherbury, likewise appears a little more detailed than Murphy allows. Mary's description of the Crown that he had put in place of the Duke's coronet to which he was entitled was indeed somewhat vague, but she added to this that 'underneath the Arms was a cipher, which she took to be the King's cipher, *HR*'.<sup>43</sup> This, surely more than anything else, argued that Surrey was setting himself up as royalty and would undoubtedly have been used in the trial. Likewise, Mary's descriptions of her brother's 'passionate speeches', while not used to convict him, would not have helped his case. It would be unfair to state that Mary single-handedly caused her brother's execution, or that she desired to accomplish this, because there were plenty of other depositions which

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<sup>40</sup> Murphy, p. 234.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>42</sup> *CSP Spain*, IX, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Cherbury, p. 628.

condemned him. Nevertheless, I do not think her evidence was as tempered as Murphy has argued; whether accidentally or on purpose, Mary did play a role in her brother's conviction.

It is possible that Mary recognised that she had to give evidence against her brother in order to save her father. Yet perhaps we are discounting the effects of interrogation here. Mary had seen her fair share of political upsets; as one of Anne Boleyn's ladies in 1536 she would have been questioned then. She had proved herself tough at home and at court as we saw in Chapter 5, bullying her father until he allowed her to sue personally to the King for her jointure, and then calmly refusing the King's own decision that she marry Sir Thomas Seymour, a proposal she likewise dismissed when it was revived earlier in 1546.<sup>44</sup> But in 1546, it has been argued, Norfolk's enemies were desperate to find any scrap of evidence which might be used against him, and this meant that Mary herself might be in danger. The councillors' report of her reaction to the news of the arrests clearly shows that she was frightened; 'wee founde the Duchesse a woman sore perplexed fumbleng and lik to fall downe'.<sup>45</sup> Further, the wording of their report underlines the level of Henry's suspicion, and perhaps suggests that they had expected Mary to be defiant: they stated that 'shee was not *wee assure your maiestie* forgetfull of her dewtie and dyd most humbly and reverentlie upon hir knees humble herself in all unto your highnes'.<sup>46</sup> Mary was in an immensely difficult position similar to that of her father at Catherine Howard's fall in 1541. She could not refuse to answer an examination, for this was itself treason. Likewise, if she said nothing, or appeared to know nothing of events described by others, they would know she was lying. Mary had to tread a very careful line

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>45</sup> TNA SP1/227, fol. 82.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, my italics.

between saying too much or too little, and given her fright, it is hardly surprising that she was not wholly successful.

What, however, of the Duke's wife, Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk? Cherbury suggests that she was interrogated by the council. If they really were seeking any possible avenue which might lead to a treason conviction for Norfolk, it would make sense to question his estranged wife. Cherbury states:

...divers occasions of scandal were given: Insomuch, that not being content with having surmised a long while since two Articles against him, she again in sundry Letters to the Lord Privie-Seal, both averr'd the Articles, and manifestly accused some of his Minions, repeated divers hard usages she pretended to receive from them, and briefly discovered all the ordinary passions of her offended sex. This...was not unwillingly heard.<sup>47</sup>

However, this sounds remarkably like a description of Elizabeth's letters written during the late 1530s and early 1540s, preserved among the Cotton Manuscripts, and not a description of a deposition. A letter written by Elizabeth in December 1536 actually states that she had written two 'articles' against her husband, and the rest of the letters are indeed full of accusations against both the Duke and his 'minions'.<sup>48</sup> I would argue that Cherbury's description is not indicative of a deposition; he did not, for instance, describe what Elizabeth said about Norfolk's relationship with 'new' nobility, nor Surrey's heraldry, whereas all the other depositions that he related mentioned these things. Moreover, Norfolk himself commented in a letter after his arrest that even if questioned, Elizabeth knew nothing against him since they did not live together.<sup>49</sup> Whether or not Elizabeth was questioned, it seems clear that any evidence she gave did not prove useful.

Mary's actions after her brother's execution and her father's imprisonment further underline the fact that she did not deliberately seek to

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<sup>47</sup> Cherbury, p. 626.

<sup>48</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B I, fols. 392-3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 101.

condemn either of them. She was granted custody of her brother's four children in 1547, and spent the reign of Edward VI raising them at her half-uncle Lord William Howard's manor of Reigate.<sup>50</sup> Throughout this period she also sued to the King to try to improve her father's situation in the Tower.<sup>51</sup> Norfolk recognised her actions on behalf of himself and the family in his 1554 will, granting Mary £500 because she had made 'great shift' to get him out of prison.<sup>52</sup> Mary, then, was responsible for raising the next generation of the Howard dynasty and for maintaining its existence until they were able to rise to prominence once more with the accession of Mary I in 1553. Far from revealing internal fractures in the Howard family, this demonstrates the importance of the Howard women as the glue holding the dynasty together.

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Although for reasons of space this thesis was limited to Henry VIII's reign, only one of the five women studied died within this period; the rest survived into the 1550s.<sup>53</sup> A glance beyond 1547 places their actions during Henry's reign into context. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, the eldest of our women, died in 1545 aged almost seventy, and did not see her family fall at the end of the reign. Uniquely among the survivors, the dynasty's fall proved somewhat advantageous to the remaining Duchess of Norfolk, Elizabeth. She had spent the second half of Henry's reign imprisoned at Redbourn, Hertfordshire, following an intensely

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<sup>50</sup> TNA SP10/14/45; TNA SP10/14/53.

<sup>51</sup> TNA SP10/13, fol. 22.

<sup>52</sup> TNA PROB 11/37/345.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix A.

acrimonious separation from her husband, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke. Though the execution of Elizabeth's son Henry, Earl of Surrey, in 1547 was undoubtedly very painful for her, her husband's indefinite imprisonment was fortuitous as it allowed her to escape his control. Financially, little changed. She continued to receive her annuity of £200 out of Norfolk's estate, but this was now paid by the Crown, which had confiscated Norfolk's lands.<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth continued to be able to offer some patronage, as a letter from her brother Henry, Lord Stafford, in 1547 asked her to permit him to rent a house in London which formed part of her jointure.<sup>55</sup> This, and the fact that she continued to foster Stafford's daughter Dorothy, shows that she maintained good relations with her Stafford relatives.<sup>56</sup>

In 1550 the Privy Council permitted her to visit her husband in the Tower.<sup>57</sup> There is no evidence to show whether or not she did so, and the fact that they were never reconciled strongly suggests that neither desired to see the other. The visitation rights may have been granted primarily to allow the couple's daughter Mary, dowager Duchess of Richmond, to visit her father, as she had been busy suing for his freedom. Elizabeth appears to have spent most of Edward VI's reign firmly in the background. There is no evidence that she came to court, and she was certainly not involved in any of the factional politics between the Seymours and Dudleys. On Mary's accession in 1553 Elizabeth's role gained a public dimension once more. It would seem that she was in London at the time, as Wriothesley's *Chronicle* tells us that she was present when Mary entered the city and proceeded to free political prisoners – including Norfolk –

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<sup>54</sup> *APC*, II, p. 77.

<sup>55</sup> SRO, D(W) 1721/1/10/1-432, fol. 331.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 248.

<sup>57</sup> *APC*, II, p. 400.

from the Tower.<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth then carried Mary's train at her coronation, a position undoubtedly denoting her past friendship with Mary's mother.<sup>59</sup> She never reconciled with her husband, who died in 1554, and was not mentioned in his will.<sup>60</sup> Her annuity from the Crown had been renewed on the accession of Mary I, and after 1554 she gained access to her jointure estates.<sup>61</sup> After widowhood she continued to play a more important role than she had done during Edward's reign, though she still did not rival that of Agnes, the late senior Duchess, during Henry's reign. She was, however, at the forefront of the funeral procession for Anne of Cleves in 1557.<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth died within weeks of Elizabeth I's accession in November 1558 at Lambeth. She was buried in the Howard chapel of St Mary's Church, Lambeth, as directed in her will.<sup>63</sup>

The rest of our Howard women also appear to have remained in the background during Edward and Mary's reigns. Even Elizabeth's daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, who spent Edward's reign bringing up her nieces and nephews and petitioning the Crown for their maintenance, and for the freedom and comfort of her father, was not involved in politics in the same way that she had been during the 1530s and 40s.<sup>64</sup> Though surviving letters show that she was active in promoting evangelical preachers at the beginning of Edward's reign, evidence for this tails off after 1550.<sup>65</sup> She does not appear again in the record until 1553, when her father removed her nieces and nephews from her custody. We do not know what happened to Mary after this and Beverley Murphy has

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<sup>58</sup> Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>59</sup> Graves, 'Elizabeth Howard [née Stafford], duchess of Norfolk', *ODNB* [accessed 11 February 2013].

<sup>60</sup> TNA PROB 11/37.

<sup>61</sup> *APC* IV, p. 273.

<sup>62</sup> S. Bentley, *Excerpta Historica* (London: Samuel Bentley, 1831), pp. 303-13.

<sup>63</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285.

<sup>64</sup> TNA SP10/13, fol. 22; TNA SP10/14, fols. 45, 53.

<sup>65</sup> TNA SP10/7, fols. 1, 3.



surmised that she stayed away from court during Mary's reign because of her evangelical beliefs.<sup>66</sup> It is not clear when Mary died, but this probably occurred in 1555, as she is described as the 'late' Duchess of Richmond in a grant of January 1556.<sup>67</sup>

Anne, dowager Countess of Oxford, also faded from the record. There is no evidence that she came to court at any point after Henry's reign, and she was certainly not involved in any tumultuous political events. By the end of her life in the late 1550s she had become querulous and unpopular with her servants. A number of Chancery suits were initiated against her for non-payment of wages and unfair dismissal both from her service and from her lands.<sup>68</sup> She survived the longest of all our women: an entry in Henry Machyn's diary shows that Anne died in February 1559 and was buried at Lambeth.<sup>69</sup> Her sister Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, lay low too. She remained in Lambeth after her pardon for misprision of treason in 1543 and was granted an annuity of £120 by the Crown. This continued to be paid until 1550, when she was granted access to the revenue from her jointure estates in Wales from her first marriage to Rhys ap Griffith.<sup>70</sup> In 1552, a summary of poor relief given by the inhabitants of Lambeth parish shows that she was living on the estate of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and was able to contribute a yearly sum of 6s 8d.<sup>71</sup> There is no other record of Katherine during these years and her will shows that she died in 1554, and was likewise buried at Lambeth.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Murphy, pp. 239-40.

<sup>67</sup> *Cal. Pat. Philip and Mary*, III, p. 46.

<sup>68</sup> TNA C1/1486/63-5, 89-92.

<sup>69</sup> *Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 889-90.

<sup>70</sup> *APC*, II, pp. 232, 271, 275, 297, 328, 411.

<sup>71</sup> Allen, p. 439.

<sup>72</sup> TNA PROB 10/27.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has focused on the activities of five Howard women during the reign of Henry VIII, a period when this family was particularly close to the throne. Placed at the centre of some of the most politically significant events of the sixteenth-century, their fortunes rose and fell with stunning rapidity. Uncovering the missing female ‘half’ of the Howard family narrative has revealed just how integral these women were to the dynasty’s political position.

However, their lack of political agency at court after Henry’s reign is immediately apparent from the brief outline of their later lives given in the Epilogue, and this sharply contextualises their earlier activity. This impression does not appear to be caused by a lack of surviving evidence; while the state papers of Edward and Mary’s reigns are not as comprehensive as those of Henry’s, we would undoubtedly be aware of any involvement in significant events, since we are able to chart the activities of other women such as Frances Brandon-Grey, Duchess of Suffolk. The Howard women’s lack of political impact after Henry’s reign correlates strongly with the Howard men’s loss of favour. This enhances the conclusions reached by this thesis regarding the Howard women’s relationship to patriarchal authority, and contemporary perceptions of family. The indefinite imprisonment of the Duke of Norfolk meant that the family’s biggest source of patronage, preferment and financial support was unavailable. This affected the men as well as the women; the Duke’s half-brother William, Lord Howard of Effingham, had been poised to take over from Viscount Lisle as Lord Admiral, but the events of 1547 meant that his family

connections barred him from such an important post.<sup>1</sup> While the Howard women were by no means persecuted by the government, they do not appear to have been particularly welcome at court, tarnished by Surrey's execution and Norfolk's imprisonment. This shows that the women were unable to escape Howard associations even years after marriage into other families. The way that the fate of the Howard men circumscribed the activities of the family's women highlights that aristocratic families were understood as collective entities by outsiders, even if individual members did not always feel or behave in this way. This clearly illustrates the value of studying early modern women in familial context: if contemporaries could not remove them from their dynastic situations, it stands to reason that we should not either.

The strength of contemporary dynastic association also shows how these women were unable to escape the constraints of early modern patriarchal society. The Howard women's relationship with patriarchal authority has been a central theme throughout this thesis, whether in the form of male relatives, male patrons, or the King himself. This study approached these women with the understanding that they necessarily operated within the confines of patriarchy. To suggest otherwise would be both anachronistic and incorrect; for instance, the Howard women were accomplished at exercising patronage alongside both men and women within the established system, and this did not curtail or constrain their influence. Alongside this, however, the thesis has focused on the unusual extent to which these women attempted to subvert and resist patriarchal authority through strong female kinship networks, marital disputes and outright rebellion.

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<sup>1</sup> McDermott, 'William Howard, first baron Howard of Effingham', *ODNB* [accessed 17 February 2013].

Not only has the thesis uncovered significant episodes previously understudied by historians, and provided new perspectives on well-known events, it also suggest that the Howard women's relationship to patriarchal authority was unusual even by contemporary standards. While comparative analysis has shown that subversion, wilfulness, and outright rebellion in the face of male authority were not unique to the Howard women, this thesis has shown that they involved themselves in an unusual amount of conflict. To find so many such episodes within one generation of one dynasty – and, indeed, among only five women of that generation – is not common. Other women with noteworthy relationships to patriarchal authority, such as Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, or Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, did not find themselves involved in as many politically or dynastically damaging situations as these Howard women; likewise, they appear to have been unique individuals within their families. Further study of other women from single dynasties would undoubtedly provide fruitful, more detailed comparison, but the available comparative research allows this thesis to argue strongly for the unusually difficult relationship between the Howard women and patriarchal authority. These women rattled around inside the box that was patriarchal society; they struck out at its confines more often and more violently than most other noblewomen, and gave it a few hefty dents. Quite clearly all five of these women, in different ways, were some distance from the popular image of the submissive wife or daughter – they had a clear idea of the influence they possessed and were prepared to fight for what they perceived to be their rights.

It remains evident, however, that they conducted their 'fights' within the confines of the existing system. For Elizabeth to refuse to accept her husband's

adultery and then refuse to return to him was unusual; the way in which she used her patronage relationship with Thomas Cromwell to try to mediate and mitigate her situation was not. Similarly, the way that her daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, fought with her father over what she perceived as his ineffective suit to obtain her jointure from the King was uncommon, but her use of professional legal advice and petitions to Cromwell as an alternative route to success was less so. They worked within the patriarchal culture of aristocratic society while rebelling against sources of patriarchal authority. These women were not changing the system; rather, they were changing their immediate experience of the system.

This illustrates the nature and degree of the agency these women possessed, and the ways in which their actions were understood and treated. Every chapter of this study makes it clear that noblewomen could be, and often were, deeply involved in politics. Thus the triangular relationship between women, their families, and the state is a thread woven throughout the thesis. Instances of marital mediation showed how women and their families could work together to manipulate the state into providing adequate practical support for women in untenable situations; conversely, reactions to the rebellion of Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, revealed how the state could cooperate with noble families to subdue women. The discussion of the ‘mirror image’ of the royal divorce within the Howard family particularly demonstrated that this three-way relationship was often deeply uneasy, and that the power balance was usually weighted against women regardless of the ways in which they attempted to resist unwanted interference.

This raises the question of the existence of any form of 'family strategy' among dynasties like the Howards. The actions of these women suggest that there were sometimes coherent group strategies, most discernibly in efforts to evade life-threatening legal convictions, or, more usually but less obviously, in attempts to augment the family's fortunes by promoting family and clients. Among the Howards, however, collective strategy was rare. Where there is evidence for such a thing, as in the wake of Catherine Howard's arrest in 1541, it becomes apparent that the efforts to protect relatives and friends involved only a small portion of the family. This shows that while the family is a useful and necessarily unit for the study of Tudor politics, it is not straightforward; more work is needed in order to integrate more fully the study of the history of the family and narratives of high politics.

It is evident that the Howard women's lack of political activity during Edward and Mary's reigns contrasted sharply with their actions during Henry's reign. There was no courting of treason convictions, no imprisonment, no intra-familial or financial disputes, no discernable court politics, and they appear to have exercised a far lower level of patronage. It was not that our women had grown old and been replaced by a younger generation. Mary, Duchess of Richmond, was only about thirty-six when she died; Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater was in her fifties; Anne, Countess of Oxford, and Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk, were about sixty. Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, and other women such as Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, had been active at court in their sixties. Further, in Edward's reign the next generation were not yet old enough to succeed our women, and even later on in Mary's reign, most of them did not appear at court; Charlotte Merton's detailed lists of ladies-in-waiting show only

one 'Mary Howard' as Maid of Honour.<sup>2</sup> It was not until Elizabeth's reign, by which time our five women were either dead or very elderly, that the court became flooded with a new generation of Howard women.

A study of this new generation would provide a fascinating comparison with the earlier Howard women of this thesis. We know that during Henry's reign they were deeply involved in high politics. The existing narrative of the Howards during Elizabeth's reign suggests this remained the case. Yet another Howard Duke of Norfolk was executed for high treason in 1572. This followed the 1569 Northern Rebellion, in which we know that Jane Howard-Neville, Countess of Westmorland, played a part; the female perspective of these events has never been investigated. Did political involvement change for the Howard women under a Queen regnant? The feminised Privy Chamber of a reigning Queen would uncover an entirely new dimension to the kind of gendered family history offered here, and would build on the existing work of Merton and Mears regarding the political agency of women in Elizabeth's court.

Could the Howard women's abrupt cessation of political involvement after 1547 mean that Edward's reign was unfruitful for women in politics and that, by contrast, Henry's reign was something of a golden age? There is currently no study of noblewomen's political activity during the reign of Edward VI but this makes clear that one is needed. The agency exhibited by the Howard women during Henry's reign certainly appears to rival what is known about women's roles during Mary and Elizabeth's reigns. Henry's frequent changes in Queen potentially gave women greater opportunities for a far bigger impact on the meteoric rise and fall of noble families than in any other Tudor reign. We saw

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A, and Merton, 'The Ladies who Served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth', Appendix 1.

how the Howard women were responsible for building up the dynasty's political influence in this way; Agnes, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, was at least partially responsible for the placement of future Queen Catherine Howard at court. Yet they were also responsible for the ruin of that influence; the behaviour of Catherine Howard before her marriage whilst in Agnes' household, and Agnes' knowledge of this, led to the arrest, attainder and imprisonment of many members of the dynasty.

To properly investigate such a hypothesis requires more work on women belonging to other, similarly high-profile aristocratic families. The Howard family's position in the shadow of the Crown made them ripe for a study of this nature, but other dynasties would undoubtedly also benefit from a female perspective. One which immediately leaps to mind is the Brandon family, Dukes of Suffolk. They occupied a similarly high-status position during Henry's reign, as the family's patriarch Charles, Duke of Suffolk, was among the King's closest friends.<sup>3</sup> Several Brandon women are already somewhat known to scholarship: the Duke's second wife Mary Tudor, the King's youngest sister, is known for her support of Catherine of Aragon, and his third wife Katherine Willoughby for her strong reformist sympathies.<sup>4</sup> We also met two of Brandon's daughters, Ladies Powis and Monteagle, in this thesis as sufferers of marital disputes. The Pole family might also benefit from such a study. Pierce's biography of Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, provides an excellent start to this, but Pole's daughters and daughters-in-law remain unstudied and we do not know what role they played in the political machinations of the Pole dynasty. The women of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Gunn, *Charles Brandon*.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, 'Power, Profit and Passion'; Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community*.



Seymour, Percy, or Neville families would also provide useful comparative studies.

While this study has often discussed the five Howard women collectively in order to gain a conceptual impression of the Howard dynasty, it does not ignore their individuality. As such, it has changed existing impressions of some of these women and added new and colourful characters to the existing cast of well-known early modern aristocratic women. The scholarly tradition of Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk, as a morally dubious, lax guardian of vulnerable young girls has particularly been altered and her character rounded out. While she probably was aware of some of the insalubrious activities of the young Catherine Howard within her household, it also sets this in context. When Agnes caught Catherine, she punished her. Such things were not originally treasonable, and there was no way for Agnes to have known that Catherine would become Queen; once the King had made his decision there was nothing she could feasibly have done which might have saved the family from ruin. This was a relatively small mistake, although there is no denying the seriousness of the consequences. On the whole, however, far from being a thorn in the family's side, Agnes was one of its greatest assets. She was the most powerful patroness of all the five women, instrumental in promoting the Howard dynasty, and conducted herself irreproachably as a wife and mother; she was, in fact, their reliable matriarch.<sup>5</sup>

This contrasted with her junior counterpart Elizabeth Stafford-Howard, Duchess of Norfolk. While her friendship with Catherine of Aragon shows that she could be loyal and possessive to the point of calamity, she appears to have found it more difficult to form and maintain relationships with kin. Thus the

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1.

analysis of Elizabeth found here enables the emergence of a more nuanced picture of her character. That of her daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, conversely, appears far stronger and more forceful than hitherto appreciated. The discussions of her jointure dispute, involvement in treason, and religious fanaticism have shown that Mary was startlingly independent by contemporary standards, even in comparison with the other women of this study, and remained so throughout her life. Yet while Mary gave patriarchal authority an especially determined run for its money, notably in her refusal to remarry even when ordered by the King to do so, she also exhibited the biggest change in attitude when she spent the 1550s dutifully raising her nieces and nephews – perhaps a shift from teenage rebellion to considered adulthood. This, alongside her religious preferences, has served to highlight the important generational gap between women raised in the 1510s, and those raised in the 1530s.

Anne, Countess of Oxford, and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater, constitute important new additions to our knowledge of aristocratic women. Though Anne was closer to her reliable mother Agnes than to independent Mary on the spectrum of rebellious behaviour, analysis of her marriage breakdown clearly showed that like all these women she was eager and able to take control when necessary. Anne is also noteworthy for her particularly strong identification with the Howard dynasty. Her sister Katherine was perhaps the biggest revelation of this thesis, and should certainly be placed in the running for the title of ‘most rebellious woman of the sixteenth-century’. Her activities in Wales and during the Pilgrimage of Grace had previously received little attention and her divorce none at all, but this thesis has shown that these were important and immensely unusual episodes. Katherine’s close female kinship networks and

her difficult relationship with many of the male authority figures in her life mean that she is a very significant addition to existing bodies of knowledge.

The study of Katherine in particular has allowed this thesis to confirm and extended existing conclusions regarding Thomas Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, the family patriarch during this period. Scholars were already aware that Norfolk was an unpleasant character, and his difficult family relationships had previously been recognised by his biographer, David Head.<sup>6</sup> However, this thesis has uniquely showcased his troubles with his female relatives, which has revealed his evident understanding of the political impact of their actions, and his hypersensitivity to the dynasty's political situation. Norfolk's response when faced with a recalcitrant female was to cut her off from dynastic support wherever possible, though these women's close female kinship ties meant that this was not always effective. Though we might feel indignant on their behalf at his often callous treatment, this thesis suggests that we might legitimately feel pity for Norfolk. Few men were faced with such difficult female relations during this period and it seems that he, like several others they encountered, was often baffled as to how to deal with them.

This brings us back to the central point of this thesis. The Howard women were clearly an integral part of the dynasty's political fortunes during Henry's reign. Without the patronage skills and agency of several of these women, the family could not have risen to the dizzy heights that it did; but equally, without their rebellions and involvement in cases of treason, the family would never have fallen from grace so fast and so frequently.

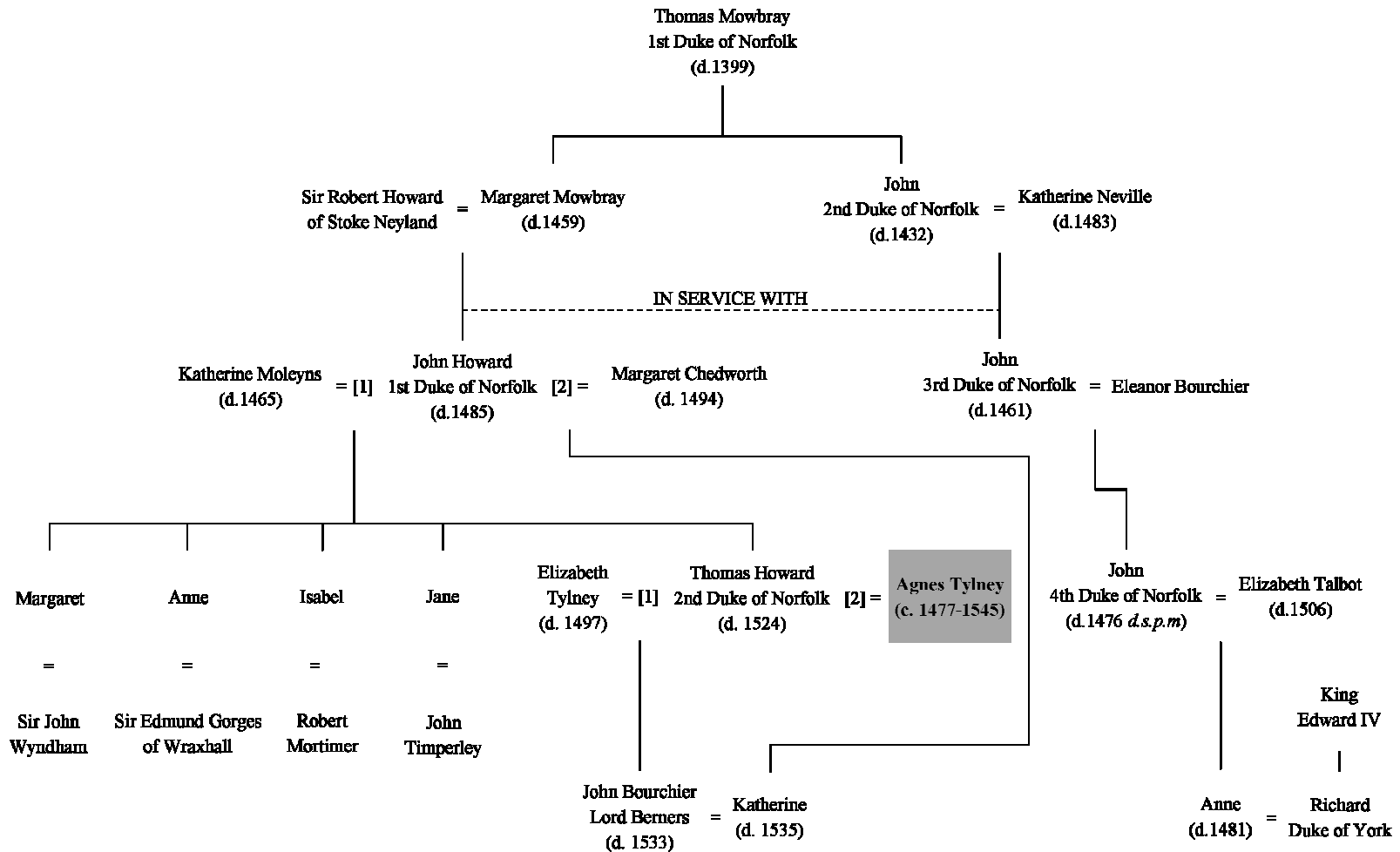
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<sup>6</sup> Head, pp. 247-55.

## APPENDIX A

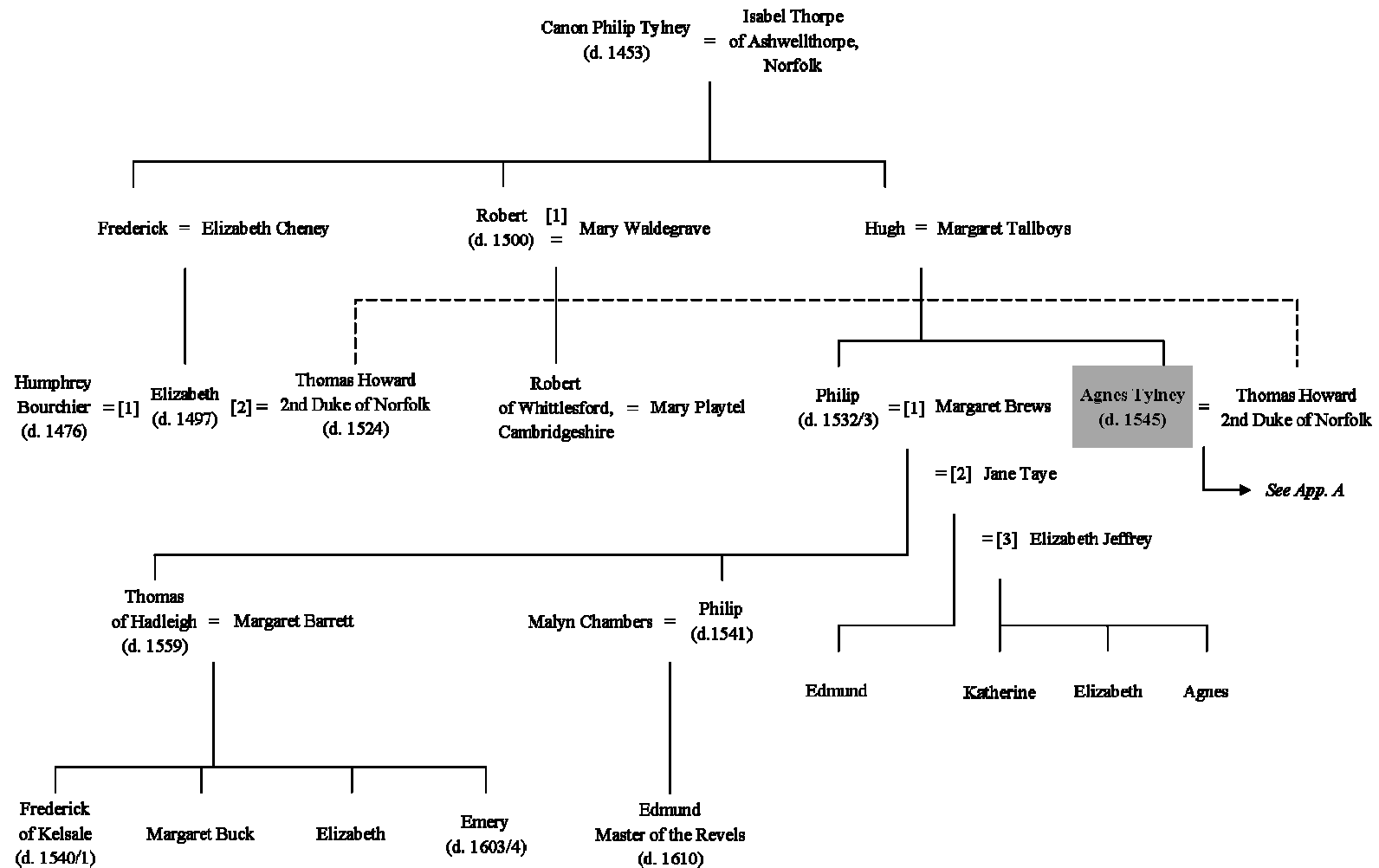
## Appendix B

### Roots of the Tudor Howards



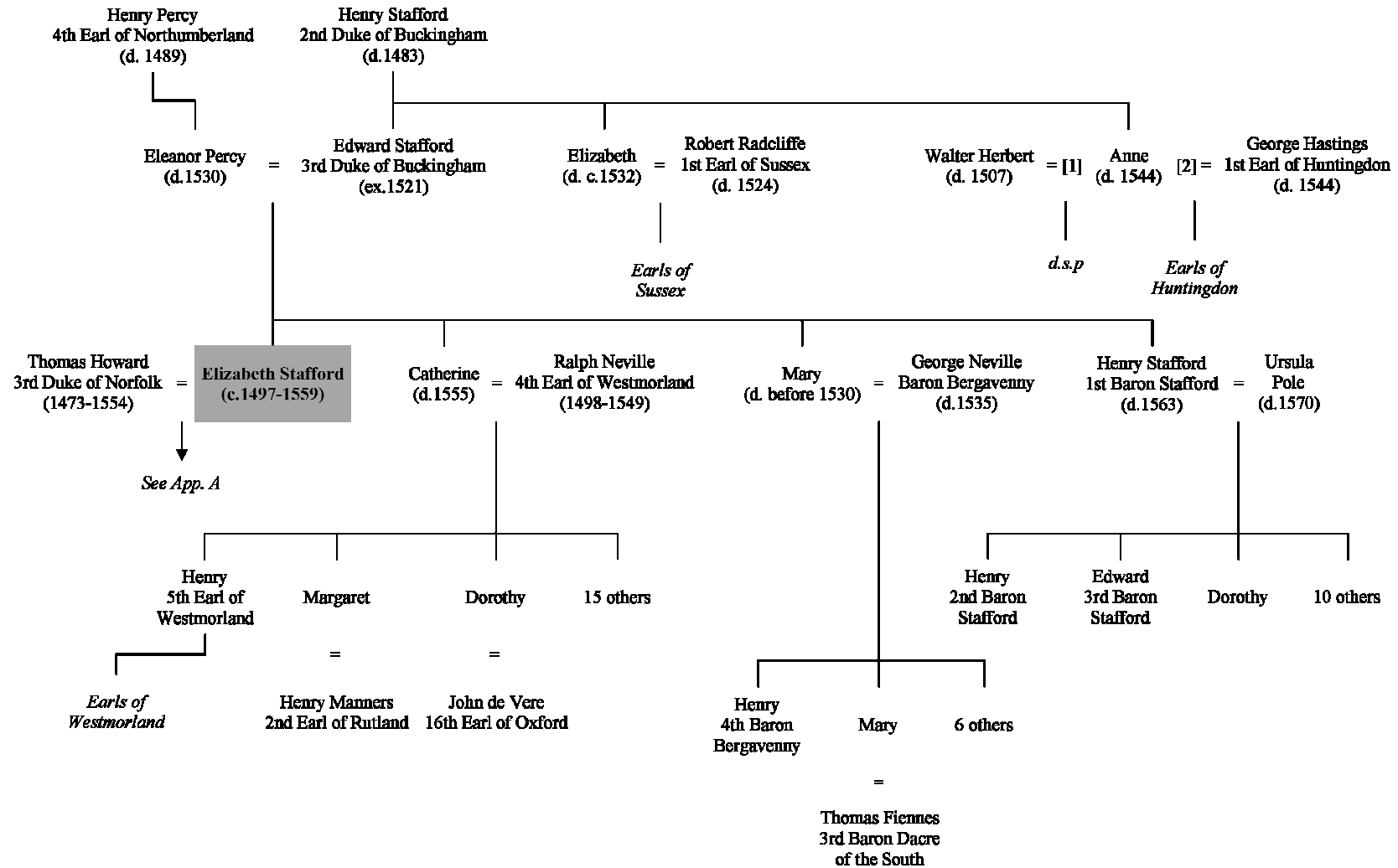
## Appendix C

### The Tylneys



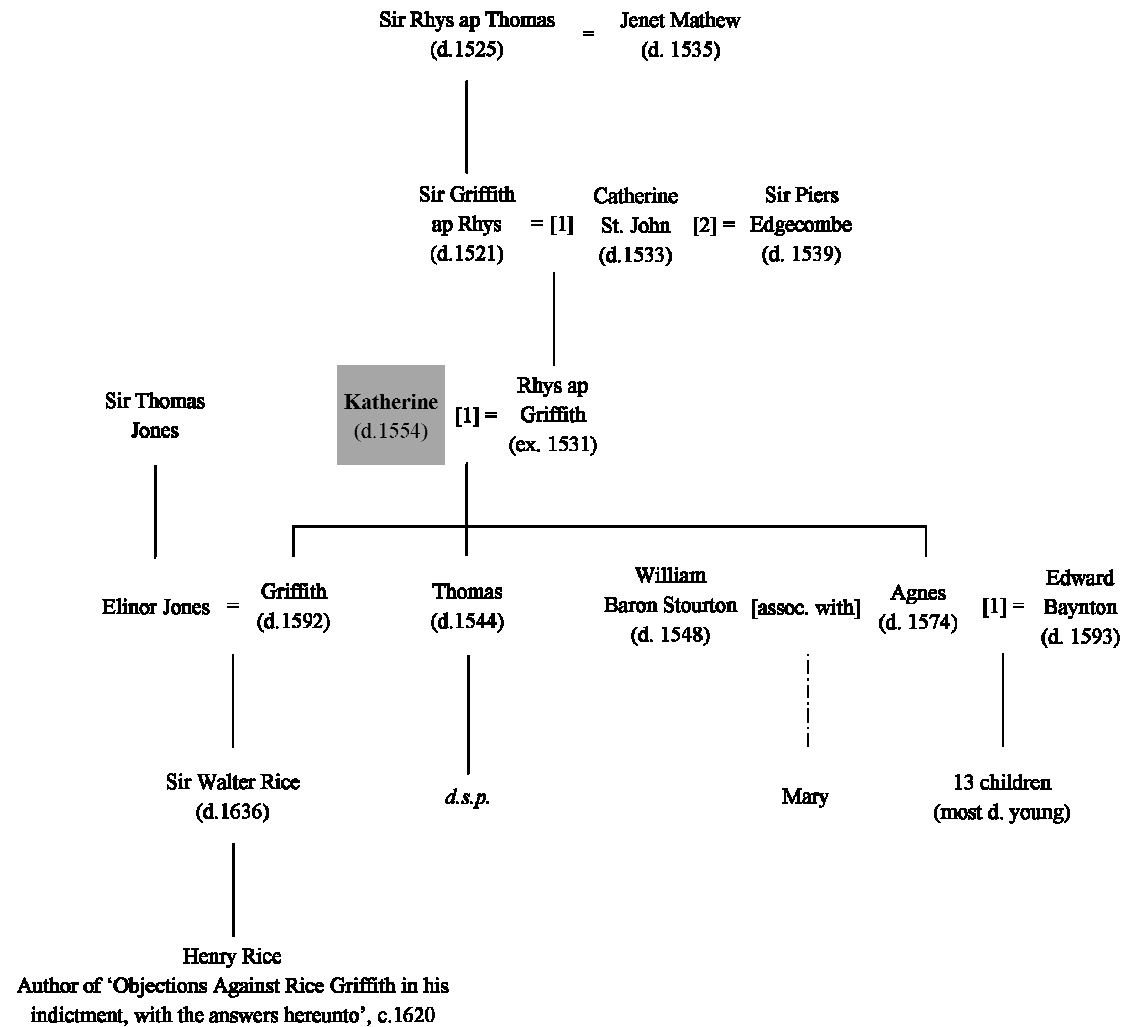
## Appendix D

### The Staffords



## Appendix E

### The ap Rhys'





## Appendix F Marriage Data

Table 1: Howard marriage data, 1485-1524

<u>Name</u>	<u>Groom/Bride</u>	<u>Date of Betrothal</u>	<u>Date of Marriage</u>	<u>Dowry</u>	<u>Jointure at time of marriage</u>	<u>Jointure if later altered/assured</u>
Thomas Howard, Lord Howard*	Anne Plantagenet		Feb 1495	None <sup>1</sup>	Unknown	
Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey	<b>Agnes Tylney</b> , da. Hugh Tylney of Boston, Lincs.	14 Aug 1497	8 Nov 1497	Unknown	Unknown	£308 18s 10d ob in 1524
Edward Howard	Elizabeth Stapleton	Unknown	c. 1500	Unknown	Unknown	
Elizabeth Howard <sup>+</sup>	Thomas Boleyn	Unknown	c. 1500	Unknown	Unknown	11 manors in 1531
Muriel Howard <sup>+</sup>	John Grey, Vic. Lisle	Unknown	c. 1504	Unknown	Unknown	
Edward Howard <sup>+</sup>	Alice Lovell, Lady Morley (second wife)	Unknown	c. Jan 1506	Unknown	Unknown	
Thomas Howard, Lord Howard*	<b>Elizabeth Stafford</b> , da. of Edward, duke of Buckingham	Nov/Dec 1511	c. Feb 1512	2000 marks	500 marks	
<b>Anne Howard*</b>	John de Vere, heir of John, 13 <sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford	Nov 1511	By Sep 1512	Unknown	14 manors	
Edmund Howard <sup>+</sup>	Joyce Culpeper	Unknown	1513	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Katherine Howard*</b>	Rhys ap Griffith, grandson of Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Wales	Mar 1514	By Aug 1522	£600	£200	£196 18s 1d in 1531.
Elizabeth Howard*	Henry Radcliffe, heir to Robert Lord Fitzwalter (later earl of Sussex)	Aft. 1520	By May 1524	Unknown	Unknown	

\*Children of Thomas Howard, then earl of Surrey, later 2<sup>nd</sup> duke of Norfolk (d. 1524).

<sup>+</sup> **Children of John Howard, first duke of Norfolk (d. 1485); siblings of Thomas Howard, then earl of Surrey, later 2<sup>nd</sup> duke of Norfolk (d. 1524).**

<sup>1</sup> An indenture between the Queen, Elizabeth of York, and Thomas Howard, specified that Anne brought no dower, but that Thomas would have £120 yearly out of certain estates set aside for their use, the which was to cease on Anne's death.

**Table 2: Howard marriage data, 1524-1546**

Name	Groom/bride	Date of betrothal	Date of marriage	Dowry	Jointure at time of marriage	Jointure if later altered/assured
Catherine Howard*	Maurice Berkeley, heir to Lord Berkeley	1525	N/A – betrothal broken within year	£1000	500 marks (£300)	
Thomas Howard*	Elizabeth Marney	Unknown	c. 1526	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Mary Howard*</b>	John de Vere, Lord Bulbeck, heir to earl of Oxford	Bef. 1529	N/A – betrothal broken Dec 1529	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Mary Howard*</b> (same as above)	Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond	Dec 1529	Nov 1533	Unknown	Unknown	£744 10s 9d ob
Catherine Howard* (same as above)	Edward Stanley, earl of Derby	c. Dec 1529	By Jan 1530	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Dorothy Howard<sup>+</sup></b>	Edward Stanley, earl of Derby	c. Oct 1530	By Jan 1531	4000 marks	1000 marks	
William Howard <sup>+</sup>	Catherine Broughton	Unknown	1531	c. 40 manors	Unknown	
<b>Katherine<sup>+</sup> Howard-ap Rhys</b>	Henry Daubeney, Lord Daubeney	Aft. Dec 1531	Aft. Dec 1531	Unknown	Unknown	
Henry Howard, earl of Surrey*	Frances de Vere	Feb 1532	1533	4000 marks	500 marks	
Thomas Howard <sup>+</sup>	Lady Margaret Douglas	Easter 1535	Bef. June 1536	Unknown	Unknown	

\* Children of Thomas Howard, third duke of Norfolk (d. 1554)

<sup>+</sup> Children of Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk (d. 1524) and Agnes Tylney; siblings of the above

## Appendix G

### **The wills of Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk (d. 1545), Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk (d. 1558) and Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater (d. 1554)**

#### **Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk (d. 1545)<sup>1</sup>**

I Agnes duches of Norff widdowe of late the wife of the moste noble prince Thomas duke of Norfolke deceased being of hole mynde and parfitte memory and upon rype and good deliberacion doo make my testament and laste will the xijth day of marche in the yere of our lorde god a thowsaunde five hundredth fourtie and twoo in manner and fourme hereafter following / Ffurste I revoke and admit all other testameantes and wills made by me of my gooddes and Cattalls bering date before the date hereof if anny suche hereafter shalbe founde and this only to stande in effecte / also I bequeath my soule to almightie god my Creator and Redemer / And my body to be buried w<sup>t</sup> in the parrishe church of Lambithe in the Conntie of Surrey in suche place whereas I haue prepared my Tombe / Item I geue and bequeath to my chapple at Lambith my best chalice of siluer and gilte with the patten / Item I geye to docter Cooke a saulte of siluer and gilte with a couer, if he live after me whiche saulte is nowe daulie occupied in my howse / Item I geue to Elizabeth Leykenowre<sup>2</sup> my gentlewoman if she be w<sup>t</sup> me at the tyme of my deathe a playne goblet of siluer and gilte / Item I geue to William Ashebye<sup>3</sup> a playne goblet of siluer and gilte w<sup>t</sup> out a couer if he lyve after my decease / Item I will that all my sarvauntes bothe men and women shalhaue their hole yeres waiges all they that be w<sup>t</sup> me and in my service at my departing owte of this worlde / Item my debtes paide and after my burial p[er]fourmed I will that my sonne lorde William howarde<sup>4</sup> shalhaue iiij partes of all my gooddes bothe householde stuffe Juells and plate and of all other stuffes whatsoever it be / Item I geue to my lady Brigewater my doughter<sup>5</sup> the fourthe parte of all my gooddes both householde stuffe Juells and plate and of all other stuffe whatsoever it be / And also the fourthe parte of all my raiment / Item I geye to Fr John Rabon channtery priste of Lambithe twoo siluer spones if he lyve after my decease / Item I geue to my nephewe Tynlay<sup>6</sup> a goblet of siluer and gilte w<sup>t</sup> out a cover / ffurthermore to p[er]fourme this my laste will in euery pointe I make myne executours my sonne lorde William Howarde and my nephewe Tynley / Agnes Norff / Sealed and subsealed in the p[res]ens of us John Lynsey and henry whitereason

#### **Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk (d. 1558)<sup>7</sup>**

The last daye of Nouember in the yere of oure lorde god a thousaunde five hundred fiftie and eighte I Elizabeth duchesse of Norf beinge sicke and diseased in my bodye but yet of good and p[er]fite memory and remembraunce thinke it be to god ordeyne

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<sup>1</sup> TNA PROB 11/30/596.

<sup>2</sup> Lewknor. The Lewknors were a Sussex family, which is probably how Elizabeth came to work for Agnes, who spent much of her time at her manor of Cheseworth in Horsham, Sussex.

<sup>3</sup> Her steward.

<sup>4</sup> Baron Howard of Effingham. See Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater.

<sup>6</sup> Probably her eldest nephew Thomas Tynley of Haddleigh. See Appendix C.

<sup>7</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/285.

and make this my testament and last will in maner and forme folowinge / ffurst I remytt and bequeath my sowle to almighte god to oure lady seynt marye and to all the blessed companye of heaven and my bodie I will shalbe buried in the p[ar]ishe Church of Lambeth / And I will that there shalbe bestowed on my funerale xxv *li* By the discretion of myne executo<sup>rs</sup> / Also I giue and bequeath to my suster Stafforde<sup>8</sup> all my apparel and yewrye stufte except that whiche I haue given to my lady Dacres and her ij daughters<sup>9</sup> whiche is recited in a bill wherof my lady dacres hath a copie all w<sup>th</sup> p[ar]cells of stufte conteyned in the said bill I giue to my saide Lady dacres and her ij daughters by this my last will / Also I giue and bequeath to my lordes grace the duke of Norffolke<sup>10</sup> my greater tablettes and to my ladyes grace his wif<sup>11</sup> my gowne of crymysyne velvet and to my lorde Thomas my sonne<sup>12</sup> a cuppe of silu[er] and gilte w<sup>t</sup> the cover also I giue and bewueth to my lady margarett hawarde<sup>13</sup> ij gownes of taffeta and to my suster Stafforde my best ffrenche hoode and to mistres Elizabeth wotton<sup>14</sup> a newe ffrenche hoode and an olde ffrenche hode and to mistres seyntloue a newe ffrenche hode and the silu[er] cuppe w<sup>t</sup> cover that I use to drunke of / Also I giue and Bequeth to Nicholas Cobley my best grey geldynge / all the rest of my goodes catalls and dettes mouable and unmouable I giue and bequeath to my lorde Stafford my Brother whome also I do ordeyne constitute and make my faithfull and sole executour to execute and p[er]fourme this my last will and testament for the healthe of my sowle / Also I giue and bequeath to my suster Stafforde my best sadle w<sup>t</sup> the cover of velvet and all that belongith therto / These beinge witnesse By me Anthony ffortescue By me John knight Clerke pro me Robertu Sutton Notarum publicum.

### **Katherine, Countess of Bridgwater (d. 1554)<sup>15</sup>**

In dei nom[ine] Amen. I ladye Kateryne countes of Brygewater Beinge hole in mynde & p[er]fite in memorye sycke of bodye make this my last will & testament / The xxv of m[ar]che in thyere of o<sup>r</sup> Lorde God thowsonde ffyve hundred fyvetye & ffoure / Ffirst I comyte my soule in to thandes of Almightye God my Savyour & Redemo<sup>r</sup> & c. & my Bodye to be buryed in my Ladie my mother<sup>16</sup> tombe in the chapell w<sup>in</sup> the p<sup>r</sup>yshe church in Lambeth / Itm I will that all my debtes be payed & my s[er]vantes to be payed oon hole yere wages / besydes that to theyme ys nowe dewe accordynge to the rate that eu[er]ye of theyme hath hade of me heretofore / as at appereth by a boke by me therof made / Itm I [inserted above: will &] bequeve to Bryane dacombe<sup>17</sup> in money ffoure poundes of currante money of Englund my grete grey geldynge that I bought last / oon ~~no~~-meane ffetherbed . peyer of Blanketes . oon peer of shetes of

<sup>8</sup> Sister-in-law Ursula Pole-Stafford, Lady Stafford. See Appendix D.

<sup>9</sup> Niece Mary Neville-Fiennes, Lady Dacre of the South, daughter of Elizabeth's younger sister Mary Stafford-Neville, Lady Bergavenny.

<sup>10</sup> Grandson Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk. See Appendix A.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Audley-Howard.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Howard, Viscount Howard of Bindon.

<sup>13</sup> Daughter of Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk, and later Countess of Dorset.

<sup>14</sup> Possibly a great-niece, daughter of the aforementioned Mary Neville-Fiennes, Lady Dacre of the South, by her second husband Sir John Wotton.

<sup>15</sup> TNA PROB 10/27. I am grateful to Dr Hannes Kleineke for this reference. The bundle containing this will is labelled: 'This will was found in a bundle labelled 'This is a bundle of documents, the names or dates of which cannot be made out or do not appear to have been proved'. Placed on the file for the year on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1890'. Thus it is not clear whether Katherine's will was ever proved.

<sup>16</sup> Agnes, Duchess of Norfolk.

<sup>17</sup> The Dacombs were a Somersetshire gentry family. Katherine probably encountered them during her second marriage to Henry Daubeney, Earl of Bridgwater.

bokerame / Itm I will & geve to Alyce Rosyngton gentylwoman a gowne of blacke velvett ffrenge w<sup>t</sup> blacke sylke / Itm I will to Briget Burtone my gentilwomane gowne of blacke velvett laide w<sup>t</sup> p[ar]chement lace / Itm I will geve to M<sup>ers</sup> Goodemane gowne of blacke saten ffurred w<sup>t</sup> sableys / Itm I will geve to my sone Gryffyth Ryce<sup>18</sup> my gowne of blacke velvett furred w<sup>t</sup> blacke Jenette / Itm I will & geve to Agnes Bayntone my doughter<sup>19</sup> two kertelles whereof the one of blacke velvett & thother of blacke saten / oon sylver cuppe w<sup>t</sup> cover p[ar]cell gilt / oon litell ewer of sylver / Itm I will & geve to Arthur Assheby<sup>20</sup> towe spoynes of sylver / Itm I geve to Briget Burtone and Jane Nele<sup>21</sup> all my lynen belongynge to my bodye & towe ffrensche hoddes to be equalye devyded betewen theyme / Itm I will & geve to Emorye tylney my kinesmane<sup>22</sup> my braselet of golde / Itm I will & geve to henrye pryot my s[er]unte Fyve poynndes thirtene shillinges ffoure pence of currantte money of Ingland / Itm to nycholas wylemott my s[er]unte ffoure ponde of money & oon geldynge / Itm to Iryserann (?) Wilmott my s[er]unte ffyve three shillinges ffoure pence of lafull money of England / Itm to Edward Warenor ~ ~ childe of kechyn ffyve three shillinges ffoure pence / Itm I geve to Richard phelippes<sup>23</sup> in money ffoure m[ar]kes & white geldynge / Itm I geve to m'garet leyce & Elizabeth . [gap here as though for more names] my maydens in Walis ffyve pounds equalye to be devyded betewen theyme / Itm I geve to Fr Thomas Bentley curett of Lambeth in money tewentye shillinges / Itm I geve to marye my doughter Anne Bayntones doughter<sup>24</sup> gilt spoynne of silu[er] . angell of noble of gold . a stone called Jacent & nother stone called Amediste set in golde . silu[er] salt gilt w<sup>t</sup> cou[er] & all other small thinges beinge in my coffers in Lambeth / Itm I geve to my brother Willm Lorde Admyrall & my [sister] his wiff<sup>25</sup> towe rynges of golde w<sup>t</sup> towe dyamones in theyme thon' creare & thother table dyamone / Itm geve to Robt pigott wiffe oon petycote of ffreyce & tenne shillinges in money [inserted from below: kertell of brase] / Itm I geve to John Whitwell nowe p[ar]sone of Lambeth in money tenne shillinges / Itm I geve in money to the poure Inheritance [inhabitants] of Lambeth in money tewentye shillinges / Itm I will & bequeve all the rest of my gooddes moveables or unmoveable unbequeved & geven my dettes ligaces & ffunerall payed & dyscharged unto Gryffythe Ryce my sonne & to Agnes Bayntone my doughter equalye to be devyded betewene theyme By even porciones p'vided allweyes that the p[ar]te & porcione [inserted: whiche] shall come to my sayed sone Gryffyth Ryce to hyme for eu[er] / and the p[ar]te & p[or]cione of my sayede soughter Agnes to come to thuse of marye her doughter & to be delyu[er]ed to her at thage of syxtene yere / And of this laste will & testament I constytute order & make my sayed doughter Agnes Baynton sole executrice & my brother Willm nowe lorde admyrall & Arthur Assheby my sup[er]visors of the same / In witness wherof I have sette my seale & cyngued w<sup>t</sup> my hande the daie & yere of lorde abouesayed and in the ffirst yere of the reigne of most drede sou[er]ayne Ladie Quene marye by the grace of God Quene of England ffraunce

<sup>18</sup> Sir Griffith ap Rhys (d. 1592). See Appendix E.

<sup>19</sup> Agnes ap Rhys-Baynton, by 1554 the wife of Sir Edward Baynton.

<sup>20</sup> Probably a relation of her mother's servant William Asheby.

<sup>21</sup> The Neles were another Somersetshire family.

<sup>22</sup> Her second cousin Emery Tylney, a scholar of Corpus Christi College Cambridge and pupil of reformer George Wishart. See Appendix C.

<sup>23</sup> Richard may have been a member of one of two relevant Phelippes families – one based in Carmarthenshire, and one in Somersetshire.

<sup>24</sup> Her granddaughter Mary who was the illegitimate daughter of William, Lord Stourton. See Appendix E.

<sup>25</sup> William, Baron Howard of Effingham, and Margaret Gamage-Howard.

& Ireland defender of the ffayeth & of the churche of Englund & Ireland  
 ...prencehede

Signed: Katherine Brygewater

Sealed & delyu[er]ed in the p[res]ens of John Whitwell p[ar]sone of Lambeth /  
 Emorye Tylney / Arthur Assheby / Thomas Bentley curet of Lambeth / John ... / John  
 Bever . Thomas Bystare / one more illegible

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